

Poll shows deputies' opposition to certain amendments in press law

AMMAN (J.T.) — A majority of the newly-elected deputies are opposed to certain amendments introduced in May to the 1993 Press and Publications Law, according to an opinion poll conducted just before the 13th Parliament convened on Nov. 29.

The poll, in which all 80 members were contacted but only 47 responded, revealed firm opposition by the deputies to open-ended government ownership of newspapers and the role it gave itself in one amendment to keep a newspaper closed after a suspension ordered by a court of law.

The deputies, to a lesser degree though, also opposed raising the capital required to establish a newspaper whether a daily or weekly, as stipulated by the amendments.

The deputies showed less opposition to other articles of the temporary law, which included such articles as raising fines for violations of the press code and raising the work experience required for chief editors.

The poll, conducted by the new monthly newspaper Al Mashreq Al I'jami, showed basically three trends among the deputies vis-a-vis the amendments which were met by a wave of opposition by media and opposition political figures.

These trends, as revealed by the poll, are:

— Firm opposition to amendments to articles on the government's ownership of newspapers and its role in suspending the publication of newspapers violating certain articles of the law. Two thirds of the deputies surveyed expressed this opposition.

— "Medium" opposition to raising the capital of newspapers and the inclusion of the owners of newspapers in litigation procedures stipulated by the amendments. Half the deputies fall under this category.

— Weak or no opposition to the rest of the articles, which include stipulations on the work experience of the chief editors, financial reports that should be submitted by newspapers each

year, receiving financial support from abroad, and increasing fines on violators of the law's articles, with only 25 per cent to 39 per cent of the deputies voicing their rejection of these articles.

The poll showed that a minority of deputies has taken a stand either in total support or total opposition of the amendments, with the majority preferring to discuss each of the amendments separately and in detail.

Analysts who commented on the poll results for Al Mashreq Al I'jami said that although the issue of the freedom of expression and freedom of the press do not appear to be on the deputies' priority list, the interest of the Lower House in taking them up in debate is still evident, since 47 out of the 80-strong Lower House members responded in full to the poll.

The government has just referred the temporary law as a draft to be debated in Parliament.

Al Mashreq Al I'jami, which is devoted to cover-

ing press and media issues in Jordan and the Arab World and published by the newly-established Arab Media Institute, said in commenting on the outcome of the poll that the deputies' tendency to give debate of the draft law priority status, although by a small margin (44.7 per cent to 40.4 per cent) and their belief that the temporary law was destined to curb freedom of expression (59.6-27.7) show Parliament's disposition and readiness to deal with the law seriously and open-mindedly.

The paper urged civic society organisations and champions of the freedom of expression to cooperate in a bid to unify their stands on the law and influence the deputies' position "through a remarkable dialogue aiming to reach conclusions that would serve our society as a whole."

Technical assistance for conducting the poll was provided by the University of Jordan's Centre for Strategic Studies, the newspaper said.



IRAQI CHILDREN: Iraqi women and children wait to see a physician at the Saddam Hospital for children in the Kerbala province Sunday. Iraqi newspapers said Saturday that a drop of Iraq's oil would be sold on world markets until the United Nations addressed its protests over slow food and medicine deliveries. Kerbala is 100 kilometres southwest of Baghdad (Reuters photo)

Group representing Greek Orthodox Jordanians, Palestinians in the U.S. criticises Patriarch Diodoros

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A delegation representing a U.S.-based society grouping Jordanian and Palestinian Orthodox Christians Sunday lashed out at the Greek patriarch of Jerusalem and charged him with selling Arab lands in Palestine to Israel.

"It is a very sensitive issue. Most of the deals were concluded secretly between the Greek patriarch and Israel," George Mdanat, head of the Los Angeles-based Task Force to Save the Orthodox Christians in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, told a press conference in Amman.

Dr. Mdanat was referring to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Diodoros, who was allegedly involved in selling lands that belong to Arab Greek Orthodox community in Jerusalem.

"We have contacted the ecumenical patriarch in

Istanbul, His Majesty King Hussein, Crown Prince Hassan and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to intervene to put an end to these actions," said Dr. Mdanat, who is heading a nine-member delegation on visits to Jordan, the Palestinian self-rule areas and Israel.

"A political solution to this problem should be found. The political authorities in Jordan and Palestine should be involved in coming up with a solution to this," he added.

Head of the Orthodox Society in Jordan, Raouf Abu Jaber, who attended the press conference, charged that most of the lands sold by the patriarch go for settlement plans by the Israeli government.

The visiting delegation charged the Greek Patriarch in Jerusalem with "undermining Arab Orthodox interests in Jerusalem and denying Arab priests the

opportunity to move up in the church hierarchy."

Issa Bullatah, a delegation member, said that Patriarch Diodoros "has failed to ensure the social, health and educational services" to the Greek Orthodox community in the Holy Land and Jordan.

The delegation also criticised the newly-signed agreement between Israel and the Vatican that ensured the Roman Catholic Church's "legal status" over their properties in Jerusalem.

"The Pontiff has acted as if he was a political leader instead of being a spiritual one... there is a chance to believe that a deal was behind the curtain that included the recognition by the Vatican of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem in exchange of the latter's recognition of the Vatican's supremacy over the holy sites in Jerusalem," Dr. Mdanat said.

"I have no documents to support this, but there is a big possibility that a deal was concluded," Dr. Mdanat emphasised.

Dr. Mdanat was referring to the Nov. 11 agreement between the Holy See and Israel, entitled Legal Personality Agreement, "which foresees full recognition for all civil effects, within Israeli legislation of moral and legal persons wherever they have been established by the authority of the Catholic Church."

These moral and legal persons include, among other things, patriarchs, dioceses, monasteries, religious congregations and religious institutes of various kinds, the two-page treaty said.

This agreement drew wide-range criticism from the Palestine National Authority (PNA), which wants east Jerusalem as the capital of the future Palestinian state.

Syria hopes Israel will turn toward peace after spy scandal

DAMASCUS (AP) — Syria expressed hope Sunday that Israel would be more open to peace with Syria following the revelation that an Israeli agent faked false intelligence reports making Syria seem more warlike.

The English-language Syria Times, a state-run daily that reflects government views, said that peace was a strategic option for Syria and suggested Israel also should adopt that view.

"The question now is whether the Israeli government will continue its intransigent policies or will reassess its wrongly based position on peace-making?" The paper asked in an editorial.

The Israeli daily Yediot Ahronot said last week that for years a Mossad agent knowingly misled the political leadership by fabricating intelligence reports that could have brought the two countries to the brink of war.

The reports suggested Syria planned to launch a lightning strike aimed at liberating part of the Golan Heights from Israel.

Hamas founder, in implicit slap at Arafat, denounces corruption

GAZA CITY (AP) — In a thinly veiled rebuke to the scandal-plagued Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmad Yassin spoke out strongly Saturday against corruption.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank city of Hebron, about 500 red-masked Palestinian demonstrators marched, burning an effigy of an Israeli soldier in a gas mask.

Sheikh Yassin spoke in Gaza City, where about 1,000 followers attended what was billed as the first conference for the Islamic National Salvation Party, one of several affiliated with Hamas, an Islamist group whose military wing has staged more than a dozen

armed attacks inside Israel.

The Sheikh, who returned to Gaza after being freed from an Israeli prison in September, has until now avoided explicit criticism of President Arafat.

However, he has called on the Palestinian leader to free Hamas prisoners and reopen closed-down Hamas schools and clinics, an appeal he repeated Saturday.

"I say again to my brother [Arafat], this is the time to close the file of the political prisoners in the jails and to open the Islamic institutions," he said.

Much of Sheikh Yassin's popularity is based on a reputation for financial integrity, in contrast to the PNA,

whose officials have been dogged by allegations of fiscal misconduct.

"We have to stand in the face of the corruption — we should not allow corruption to take place in our nation," Sheikh Yassin said. "We have to punish strongly all those involved in corruption."

The Hebron march, staged at the Islamic University, was organised by the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a Marxist PLO faction.

The demonstrators burned Israeli and American flags and waved Palestinian and Iraqi ones. "No peace with occupation. No peace with settlements," the protesters yelled.

Islamic foreign ministers agree after dispute over Turkish-Israeli military ties

TEHRAN (AFP) — Islamic foreign ministers on Sunday adopted 142 resolutions to present to this week's OIC summit, after heated debate over Turkey's military links with Israel and its incursion into northern Iraq.

The diplomats representing the 55 members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) agreed to water down two resolutions presented by Syria at talks here ahead

of the Dec. 9-11 summit.

The adopted resolutions condemn Muslim states with military ties with Israel and demand respect for Iraq's territorial integrity, but Turkey is not mentioned by name in either text.

"All resolutions were adopted, after it was not possible at first to reach consensus on several issues," Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told

reporters.

"The resolution on Israel was adapted, and it makes no reference to any particular country... the position of the OIC is opposition to expansionist policies of the Zionist regime, but not to members of the OIC," said Mr. Zarif.

"The need to refrain from any interference in Iraq was adopted without any reservation," he added.

Arab foreign ministers huddled together after the Turkish delegation objected to the Syrian text, before agreeing the new wording.

The OIC "expresses its deep concern about the fact that some member states... are establishing military cooperation with Israel," reads the final draft.

However, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa said the resolu-

tions clearly targeted Turkey.

"They [the Turks] were isolated. Nobody has supported the Turkish delegation," he told reporters.

Syria has been involved in a heated war of words in recent days with Turkey, which has accused Damascus of giving support to the rebel Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

Thousands of Turkish troops poured across the

border into Iraq last week as part of a major ground and air offensive against the PKK.

Syria has also led a chorus of Arab anger over Turkey's decision last year to sign two military cooperation accords with Israel, expressing concern the agreements could be turned against Arab states.

The OIC foreign ministers, who are due to wrap up their two-day meeting

later Sunday after an informal brain-storming session, also approved a raft of resolutions on a host of issues affecting the Arab World.

The war in Afghanistan, violence in Kashmir and the contentious issue of the Middle East peace process are all the subject of resolutions to be approved at the full summit and to become the Tehran Declaration.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:30...A Show With the Mouse
14:30...Hammerman
15:00...Gillies Sports Special
15:15...Riding High
15:30...Animal Show
16:10...Oliver Twist
16:30...Neighbours
17:00...French Programmes
19:00...News in French
19:15...French programme
19:30...News Headline
19:35...Comedy — Murphy Brown
20:00...The Health Show
20:30...Babylon-5
21:10...Highlanders
22:00...News in English
22:30...Emergency Room
23:10...Cosmos

PRAYER TIMES

04:56...Fajr
06:18...Sunrise/Duha
11:27...Dhuhr
14:13...Asr
16:36...Maghreb
17:59...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedish Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Amman International Church Tel. 5516245

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Warm weather conditions will prevail during the day with clouds appearing at high altitudes and winds southwesterly moderate. A cold air mass will affect the Kingdom in the evening causing a

gradual drop in temperatures.

Clouds will appear at different altitudes with rain/fall expected in the northern regions gradually extending to cover all the Kingdom, and winds southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds southeasterly moderate, and seas rough.

Min/Max temp. 09/21

Aqaba 14/25

Deserts 07/22

Jordan Valley 12/24

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 24, Aqaba 26 Humidity

readings: Amman 27 per cent,

Aqaba 30 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Hanna Mansour 758863
Dr. Afif Shukri 898863
Dr. Nidal Al Dahleh 827195
Dr. Sa'ad Tawfiq 788285
Fins pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484

Al Quds pharmacy 1-1

ZARQA:

Dr. Radd Alallah 994424

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Dept. 60321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 110230

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs 623111

Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

J. Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Co. 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Luzmila 630195

Husseini Medical Centre 8138132

Khalida Maternity 6442816

Akileh Maternity 6424412

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 630140

Palestine, Shmeisani 640771

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Mushref Hospital 6672270

The Islamic, Abdali 66612637

Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646

Italian, Al-Mulajdeen 7771012

Al-Bashir 77511126

Army, Marka 89161115

Queen Alia Hospital 60224050

Anal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Genl. Hospital

109983323

Zarqa National Hospital

109900560

Ibn Sina Hospital 109866732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

109990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

1021275555

Greek Catholic Hospital

1021272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital

1021247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital

10314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by

Royal Jordanian (RJ) information

department at the Queen Alia Inter-

national Airport Tel. 108-53200-5,

where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights can be

supplied on phone 101-52700.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:15 ...San'a (RJ)

08:25 ...Damascus (RJ)

09:30 ...Jeddah (RJ)

10:35 ...New Delhi (RJ)

09:50 ...Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

10:05 ...Beirut (RJ)

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:20 ...Beirut (RJ)

10:10 ...Frankfurt (RJ)

11:00 ...Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)

12:05 ...Kuwait (RJ)

12:30 ...Cairo (RJ)

20:15 ...Bahrain, Doha (RJ)

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Queen attends Arab family day celebrations, play 'The Moment'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Sunday participated in the Day of the Arab Family celebrations at the Royal Cultural Centre, according to a press release Sunday.

Queen Noor distributed certificates to 26 outstanding families who were honoured according to the Ministry of Social Development for their efforts to raise the quality of life and their care for members of their families, their work to increase their income, and their self-reliance.

The Queen emphasised the importance of empowering women, who are "the anchors of the family," to become active participants in their own development, informed decision-makers in their homes and communities, and trained income earners in their society, the statement continued.

When the U.N. declared the International Day for the Family in 1994, Arab

countries declared the 7th of December as the Day of the Arab Family. The government of Jordan formed a national committee for the family in March 1997 to heighten awareness of family issues, strengthen the social institutions that monitor and implement policies related to the family as well as support and expand local, national, and regional efforts in implementing specialised programmes for families, the announcement read.

The national committee comprises representatives from various government ministries and from non-governmental and U.N. organisations.

Queen Noor was received by Minister of Rural Affairs and Acting Minister of Social Development Tawfiq Kreishan, Deputy President of the National Committee of the Day of the Family Farouq Naghawi, and members of the National Committee.

Also Sunday, Queen

Noor attended "The Moment," a play produced by the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) Performing Arts Centre in cooperation with the British Council, at the Royal Cultural Centre, according to a press release.

The play, which will hold daily morning and evening performances until Dec. 11, deals with the challenges young people face and the choices they have to make, as well as the impact of the rapid changes of today's world on Arab society.

Its morning performances include workshops in which students interact with the actors in trying to resolve the conflicts and main issues of the play. The play was written by Geoff Gillham, a specialist in Theatre-in-Education from the U.K., and is directed by Lina Tal, the director of NHF's Performing Arts Centre, the statement continued.

The Performing Arts Centre houses the NHF's projects in theatre, dance and a training centre for arts in education. One of its major components is the Theatre-in-Education Programme, which was launched in 1987 to enhance children's learning experiences through drama and theatre.

The Theatre-in-Education programme's annual musical and theatrical productions have appeared in national and international theatre festivals in the Arab World, Europe, and the U.S., and have received several awards for outstanding performances, according to the statement.

Queen Noor, who was accompanied by Senator Leila Sharaf, was received by Minister of Culture Qassem Abu Ein, In'am Mufit, and Director of the British Council David Burton.

Crown Prince urges 'rational dialogue' for dealing with regional problems

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan has stressed the need for all concerned parties to adopt a rational dialogue for solving the problems in the region so that there will be no room for extremism.

In his address at a dinner hosted by the Jordanian-British Friendship Society Saturday evening, Prince Hassan underlined the importance of moderation in the dealings of world nations.

Referring to the Palestine problem, Prince Hassan reiterated Jordan's strong support for the Palestinians to regain their legitimate rights and establish their independent state on their national soil.

"Jordan believes that the creation of a Palestinian state

on Palestinian national soil is inevitable. I am saying this out of the conviction that the political entity of Palestine will have to be established despite all circumstances.

"There is a strong Palestinian will for the establishment of a Palestinian state," said the Crown Prince.

Calling on the world community to stand by the Palestinians and support their rights in their land, including Jerusalem, Prince Hassan said: "We stress that Palestinians should have their rights in Jerusalem as it has been in 1948."

Referring to the Kingdom's relations with Israel, Prince Hassan said: "Jordan has to be committed to constructive dialogue in the course of try-

ing to resolve outstanding issues.

"Our differences with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policies should not prevent us from opening dialogue with the moderates in Israel and in Europe and in the world at large."

He noted that in Israel there is a school of thought calling for peace and there is an international Jewish group that recently met with U.S. President Bill Clinton appealing to him to stand firm in the face of the Israeli government's excesses.

Furthermore, Prince Hassan reaffirmed the need for the creation of a humanitarian charter and an international fund to provide aid to the

deprived people in the Middle East.

He recalled that he had discussed the suffering of the Iraqi children with U.N. officials.

Prince Hassan said the world's attention should be focused on building infrastructure for human development rather than spending on arms.

The Crown Prince praised non-governmental organisations in their efforts to help build civic societies.

Prince Hassan said Jordan's participation in the upcoming Islamic conference in Tehran reflects the Kingdom's keenness on the exchange of views with other nations and on promoting moderation among Islamic nations.

Lower House debates reference to Jerusalem in reply to King's speech

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Lower House deputies Sunday showed division over references to the touchy issue of Arab East Jerusalem, which they will include in their reply to His Majesty King Hussein's Speech from the Throne, delivered to the opening session of Parliament last week.

The 80-seat house, in its third session, debated at length a phrase in the King's speech referring to a Palestinian state with its capital "in Jerusalem," before endorsing the chamber's full reply. The issue has been a touchy one for years in Jordanian politics.

Lawmakers argued whether the term "Holy Jerusalem," as it appeared in

the House's draft reply, should be kept or replaced with the phrase used in the King's speech, "in Jerusalem," or "Jerusalem" by itself.

Independents Barjis Hadeed, Abdullah Jazi, and leftist Nasha't Hamameh called for abandoning the term "Holy Jerusalem" on the grounds that this might be understood solely as the Muslim shrines in the already divided city.

Others, including Mohammad Oran and Islamists Mohammad Ra'fat and Abdullah Akaleh, recommended using "Jerusalem" on its own, while Raji Haddad, Mohammad Kouz, and Saleh Jbour called for using the term "in Jerusalem," as used by the King in his Nov. 29 speech.

"The King knows what we do not know and sees what we do not see in this delicate and decisive stage," Mr. Jbour said.

He added that the King must have had "a specific reason" for using the preposition "in" and therefore the House must stick to it.

Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour stepped in to clarify the official position regarding Jerusalem, saying the King's words should not be misinterpreted.

"The words of His Majesty were intended and were very accurately calculated. They were not just rhetoric," Dr. Ensour said.

Jordan, the former ruler of Jerusalem, believes that the capital of a Palestinian state should be "in Jerusalem, not around it, and not anywhere

outside of it," Dr. Ensour said.

He said a general term does not serve the Kingdom's goals in its policies toward Jerusalem and what is needed now is precision in expression.

The House debated five proposals and after that, 37 of the 72 deputies present in the House endorsed the term "in Jerusalem" to replace "Holy Jerusalem."

The issue of Jerusalem has long been a sensitive one for Jordan, which ruled the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem from 1950 until losing them to Israel in 1967. However, Jordan has continued to be the custodian of Muslim and Christian sites in Jerusalem and its 1994 peace treaty with Israel recognised that role.

4 receive 10-year terms for smuggling weapons, drugs

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The State Security Court Sunday sentenced four men to ten-year imprisonment terms with hard labour after they were found guilty of smuggling drugs and weapons to Jordan.

Hassan A., 27, a Syrian national, Hussein R., 21, Askar S., 45, and Mohammad M., 31, all Jordanians, were originally sentenced to 15-year terms and each was ordered by the military tribunal to pay JD10,000 in fines for smuggling rifles, machine guns, and drugs to the Kingdom.

However, the court, which was presided over by Judge Colonel Yousef Faouri, commuted the sentence to ten years and ordered each to pay JD5,000 "because they are young, have no criminal record, and some of them support families."

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the four began their smuggling activities in 1990 and continued until their arrest in April by the Jordan Armed Forces.

During that period, the prosecution sheet said, the four managed to smuggle 88 M-16 rifles, 24 machine guns, and 225 kilograms of hashish from Syria into Jordan.

Also Sunday, the same court sentenced three men to seven-and-a-half-year prison terms after they were found guilty of smuggling weapons to the West Bank in 1996 and 1997.

The three men, Hani K., Abdul Karim J., and Abdul Karim S., all 24, originally received 15-year prison terms, which were commuted by the tribunal "because of the case's circumstances and because the defendants are young and deserve a second chance."

The prosecution charge sheet stated that the men smuggled arms to the West Bank with rubber boats via the Dead Sea. They were all arrested in the same area by Jordanian security forces on April 18.

All the verdicts handed down Sunday by the State Security Court will automatically be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within 30 days.



SIT-IN FOR 9-YEAR-OLD VICTIM: Friends and family of 'Ula Marzook, 9, who was raped and strangled on Nov. 29 by three 16-year-olds, carry her portrait and the King's portrait Sunday during a sit-in in front of Parliament demanding the execution of the three suspects. 'Ula was killed near Jerash on her way home from school, according to official sources (Photo by Yusef 'Allan)

Court overturns man's murder conviction due to 'lack of evidence'

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation Sunday overturned a March ruling by the Criminal Court sentencing a 35-year-old man to a 10-year term for murdering his married sister, according to the defendants' attorneys.

Mo'ayad Mustafa walked free after spending 15 months in prison following the higher court's second ruling to acquit him of the premeditated charges "for lack of evidence."

He was convicted by the Criminal Court of murdering his younger sister Inaya Hassan in Syria in May 1989, and was originally sentenced to death, a verdict that was commuted

to 10 years because the victim's son dropped the charges against the defendant.

Defence Attorneys Zahra Sharabati and Ahmad Najdawi had contested the Criminal Court's ruling twice, stating that the court relied on witnesses' statements rather than solid evidence.

"There wasn't enough evidence to indict our client, and the prosecution failed to present any evidence, including the body of the woman," Atty. Sharabati told the Jordan Times Sunday.

According to court documents, the family of Ms. Hassan heard that their daughter was involved in "immoral behaviour," plotted to kill her, and assigned the task to Mr.

Mustafa. On May 24, 1989, the charge sheet said, the defendant asked his sister to accompany him to Syria to buy some goods.

Between Damascus and Aleppo, the papers said, the defendant, who was driving his own car, veered off the main road, struck his sister with an iron bar, and drove over her several times until he made sure that she died, then returned to Jordan.

One of the victim's sons from a previous marriage, who was living in Kuwait and had returned to Jordan following the 1990 Gulf War, asked about his mother and was told by relatives that her brother killed her. He then filed a complaint.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

* Video cartoon film "Tintin et l'affaire Tournesol" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 4:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

PLAY

"The Moment" (Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre, at 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. (until Dec. 11).

LECTURE

* "Le rôle humanitaire en situation de crise: un exemple la Croix Rouge" (The Humanitarian Role of the Red Cross at Times of Crises) at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Plastic (abstract) art by Iraqi artist

Dhia Khaza'i at Hamourah Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Dec. 18.

* Works by Ghada Dahdaleh at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 10.

* Paintings by Ammar Khammash at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 12.

* An exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Koraishi, and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Massoudi, inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

* Works by Khalid Khreis at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 10.

* "Journey Within" by Pakistani artist Gulgee and his son, sculptor Amin Gulgee, at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 630128), until Dec. 15.

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Ministers aim to kickstart stalled global climate talks

KYOTO, Japan (AFP) — Ministers from around the globe sought Sunday to break the deadlocks barring a deal to cut output of poisonous gases blamed for changing the world's climate.

A draft negotiating agreement circulated to the 159 nations participating in the U.N. global warming talks was littered with disputed text on the eve of the final ministerial stage which is to be joined by U.S. Vice President Al Gore.

But according to a copy of the draft obtained by AFP, some thorny issues were closer to resolution, including a heated dispute over whether the European Union (EU) can be treated as a single entity, or "bubble."

British Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott said the talks had "now started in a realistic way, we have moved out of the arena of rhetoric into realistic negotiations."

Ministers would have to tackle "difficulties that are to be found in the targets, the framework, the variables and particularly getting an agreement with the developing countries," he told AFP.

"We are all hoping to get an agreement, that is an essential part of it," he said.

Developing nations are fuming at demands first raised by the United States that they make commitments in Kyoto while the EU is pitted against the United States over how far to cut emissions.

The draft deal circulated Sunday listed the developed countries which are to agree legally-binding cuts in the output of greenhouse gases that trap the earth's heat, but it mentioned no figures for reductions.

Taking 1990 greenhouse gas emissions as a base, Europe is calling for a 15 per cent cut by 2010, Japan for a five per cent cut between 2008 and 2012 and the United States for no change between 2008 and 2012.

But each offer has a different underlying base.

The United States, for example, includes six greenhouse gases in its proposal while Europe and Japan include only three — yet another source of disagreement that must be resolved.

EU ministers met to hammer out positions on the

"bubble," whether to allow variable reduction targets, which gases to include and how developing countries might come on board.

"We did not finalise anything," European Commissioner for the Environment Ritt Bjerregaard said as she left the meeting.

The European bubble was accepted in draft text which said developed nations seeking to jointly fulfil the emission cuts can do so "provided that their total combined level of emission reductions" meets the target.

But the question of whether each member of the EU should also have a set target within the overall bubble was still under dispute in the draft.

Australian Environment Minister Robert Hill said he hoped Mr. Gore's one-day visit Monday would accelerate the talks.

"The deadline is fast approaching, the United States is the world's largest emitter as well as being the world's largest economic power — it has the capacity to provide that extra impetus and I would hope that would come from Gore's visit," he told

reporters. Disagreements are rife over how to include greenhouse gas absorbing objects such as trees, variable targets, trading emission permits, sharing credit for joint greenhouse-cutting projects and developing nations.

In response to New Zealand's demand Friday that developing countries make commitments by 2004 for limits starting in 2015, Beijing's lead negotiator Zhong Shukong replied: "No, no, no."

"In the developed world only two people ride in a car and yet you want us to give up riding a bus," he complained.

The developing world and China have called for the deletion of all references to their taking on the burden of cutting greenhouse gases in the future.

They also object to entire sections dealing with trading emissions and sharing credit for joint projects to cut emissions.

According to U.N. estimates, current emission trends are likely to cause average global temperatures to rise 1.0 to 3.5 degrees Celsius over the next 100 years.



Greenpeace members carry a banner saying 'Cut CO2 Now' in a demonstration at Heian Jingu Shrine during U.N. talks on global warming in Japan's ancient city of Kyoto (Reuters photo)

Cambodian opposition leader heads big peace march

PHNOM PENH (R) — Several thousand people marched through Phnom Penh Sunday calling for peace in strife-torn Cambodia in the largest political gathering since factional fighting in July.

The peace march, organised by prominent opposition politician Sam Rainsy, drew Cambodians from all walks of life, including Buddhist monks, war veterans, taxi drivers and politicians.

Several marchers who had lost limbs to landmines walked the entire seven-kilometre route leaning on canes while other participants on motorbikes looped peace signs in English, French and Cambodian through their handlebars as they slowly followed the procession in the sweltering morning heat.

Sieng Chhat, a 32-year-old disabled veteran from northwest Cambodia, said he was tired of his country's destructive conflict.

"I lost my leg because of fighting in Cambodia," he said.

"Even though I am hurt, I am marching. I want to send all of Cambodia a message — those fighting should disarm and rejoin their families."

More than 1,000 people initially began the march at Phnom Penh's Olympic Stadium, but by the end of two-hour march, the number of participants had swelled to up to 3,000 and hundreds more Cambodians had lined the streets to cheer the procession.

Police, who have blocked several of Sam Rainsy's demonstrations in the past, held back traffic to make way for marchers, and security was not heavy.

There were no reports of any incidents in contrast to Sam Rainsy's last rally in March, when four grenades ripped through the protest, killing up to 19 and wounding more than 100.

"This is a great day, a historic day. It is a day for peace in Cambodia," Sam Rainsy told reporters as he marched.

Asked if he feared violence, he said: "I am afraid of nothing. I believe in peace."

At a rally at the Pagoda at the end of the March, he told marchers: "We want to see Cambodia's leaders reach a national settlement. We do not want to see more widows, orphans or amputees."

Former Finance Minister Sam Rainsy is a political

ally of the deposed Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who was ousted by his co-premier and coalition government partner, Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, in early July.

Fighters under Ranariddh and their Khmer Rouge guerrilla allies have been battling Hun Sen's government forces in parts of northern and western Cambodia since the prince was toppled.

Marchers said it was time for the fighting to stop.

"I want to see peace in Cambodia. Over the past two decades of my life, I have never seen peace. I support Sam Rainsy," Hean Sophea, a 29-year-old Monk, told Reuters.

Hy Samnang, a 27-year-old soldier, said he had recently deserted his army unit because he was disillusioned and had not been paid for four months.

"We don't need this fighting," he said.

Sam Rainsy, one of Hun Sen's most bitter critics, was out of the country when the prince was ousted but returned in late November calling for peace and saying he would work with the government to ensure a free and fair election is held next year.

Aid agency sounds N. Korean call for help

HONG KONG (R) — North Korea's entire health system has collapsed, a top international aid official said Sunday, with no modern medicine, anaesthetic or even soap — and no patients as the sick preferred to die at home.

The head of Medicines Sans Frontières, Eric Goemaere, told a news conference that North Korea could be heading for yet another catastrophe unless international aid was forthcoming.

Mr. Goemaere, who headed a small MSF team visiting five districts in North Hamgyong province in the last week, said hospitals and clinics he visited had abysmally low standards of hygiene and lacked modern medicine.

In most of the places he visited, there were simply no patients as the sick preferred to die at home. "There were doctors and buildings, but no aspirin, no anaesthetic,

no basic medicines, no heating, no soap and no milk and therefore no patients," he said.

"The health system in North Korea has collapsed." A video taken of an appendectomy in Kangwon county hospital in November by another MSF team showed a 30-year-old woman, under only local anaesthetic, grimacing in pain as doctors cut a hole in her side, later inserting a gubby rag to soak up blood.

"The girl died two days later from infection," Mr. Goemaere said, adding that the only sterilisation was boiling water.

Infants and toddlers in orphanages, with bloated stomachs and spindly legs too weak to support the bodies, were shown with blotches all over their faces and necks, from lack of soap.

Years of food shortages have seriously afflicted the general health of the population, exposing vul-

nerable groups to greater risk of infectious diseases and epidemics.

North Korea's problems started in 1995 when floods destroyed rice fields, food storage sites, roads and housing over large areas of the country. It was then hit by the worst heat-wave in nearly a century in August, following severe drought in June and July.

Mr. Goemaere called for more international aid for the country, including food, drugs, seeds and fertiliser, adding: "If these steps are not taken, the people of North Korea will become even more vulnerable to famine and disease over the next year."

Mr. Goemaere's team is the first to have been allowed into the northern province, and he said it was a tacit sign that authorities now acknowledged that more regions needed help.

AIDS in Africa conference opens in Abidjan

ABIDJAN (AFP) — The 10th international conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Africa (CISMA) was due to open Sunday in Abidjan in the presence of 3,000 scientists, researchers and people living with the HIV virus.

President Jacques Chirac of France and Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso were expected in the Ivorian economic capital for the conference's opening by host President Henri Konan Bedie.

AIDS is spreading in Africa faster than anywhere else in the world.

Two-thirds of the world's 30 million people infected with the HIV virus live in sub-Saharan Africa, where more than seven per cent of the population aged between 15 and 49 are HIV positive.

Under the general theme of AIDS and Development, some 1,300 events are planned in this conference which grows year by year.

The last edition of CISMA was held two years ago in Kampala, Uganda, like Ivory Coast, has been badly hit by the disease. More than a million people are HIV positive in Ivory Coast, making it the fifth most affected country on the continent.

While anti-viral drugs have helped to slow the spread of AIDS in developed countries, Africa is still witnessing a steep rise in its propagation, due mainly to insufficient prevention and poor healthcare facilities.

"AIDS is just an indicator of the weakness of African public health. Malaria, diarrhoea and tuberculosis are other, less well-known examples but just as deadly even though the cost of treating them is much lower," said one delegate on the eve of the conference.

Leaders in AIDS research, such as Luc Montagnier, who discovered the AIDS virus in 1983, Hiroshi Nakajima, the director general of the World Health Organisation, and Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, will be sure to shed light on the delicate issue of the "two speed" nature of AIDS.

CISMA will also serve as a meeting point for parallel events such as forums and non-governmental organisations fighting the epidemic.

Russia waives \$5 m bail in U.S. spy case

MOSCOW (R) — Russia has waived a \$5 million bail in conditionally releasing a U.S. telephone technician charged with espionage, the accused man's employer said in a statement released Sunday.

"They have waived the \$5 million bail on written assurances from the company, but it is our understanding that the charges of espionage still stand," said Irvin Jacobs, chairman of the San Diego-based telecommunications company Qualcomm.

Richard Bliss, a Qualcomm employee who was installing a telephone system in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don, was released from custody Saturday, a day after he was charged with espionage, but was ordered to remain in the Rostov region.

Mr. Bliss has maintained his innocence, and his company said he was doing routine work with big-tech electronics to install a wireless telephone system in the city.

He was detained on Nov. 25 for allegedly gathering secret information in the Rostov area while carrying out surveillance work using satellite equipment which Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) said was illegal.

"While Mr. Bliss is now confined to the Rostov-on-Don region, he has now been able to speak to some members of his family and to myself and other executives at Qualcomm," Mr. Jacobs said.

Mr. Bliss's lawyer Valery Petrayev said by telephone Sunday that following his release the American was staying with friends at a Rostov hotel.

"He is completely free to do whatever he wants, including work as long as he stays in Rostov," he said. "He has to stay for now in the city as long as the investigation continues, which can be two months and then extended if necessary," Mr. Petrayev said the

case stemmed from the failure of Qualcomm's Russian client Elektrovyaz to get the necessary permission for certain high-tech equipment.

"There was simply some Russian negligence, someone failed to do their job and get a permission, that's all there is to it," he said. "But this was not criminal negligence."

The lawyer said he was hoping to win Mr. Bliss's full freedom within two weeks, but acknowledged that it would be hard for local authorities to back down in the case.

"The law enforcement bodies are very conservative, and if they do something — pressing charges and arresting Mr. Bliss — then they will do all they can to be slow and restrained before backing down," he said.

The FSB, the domestic successor to the KGB security police, said the decision to free Mr. Bliss on bail was made after the U.S. ambassador in Moscow pleaded for his release.

Former drug czar Brown wins Houston mayor race

HOUSTON (R) — Former U.S. drug czar Lee Brown defeated oilman Rob Mosbacher in a run-off election Saturday, to become Houston's first black mayor.

With all of the votes counted, Mr. Brown led Mr. Mosbacher by a margin of 53-47 per cent.

"Tonight, my friends, another barrier has fallen in the city of Houston. The doors of opportunity have opened wider for all of Houston's children," Mr. Brown told cheering supporters.

"For all of Houston's children, as they dream of their future, they now know that any child can grow up to lead this city," said Mr. Brown, the son of a sharecropper from Oklahoma.

Houston, the nation's fourth-largest city, has a population of nearly 2 million people, about evenly divided among blacks, whites and Hispanics.

Political analysts said Mr. Brown won largely because of overwhelming support from black voters, but that his law enforcement background helped him also win a substantial number of white votes.

Mr. Brown, 60, served as director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, a job more commonly known as drug czar, in President Bill Clinton's first term. Before that he was police chief in Atlanta, Houston and New York City.

Mr. Mosbacher, 46, heads a Houston oil company founded by his father, Robert Mosbacher, who was U.S. commerce secretary under President George Bush.

In his concession speech, Mr. Mosbacher congratulated Mr. Brown and said he would continue to work for the betterment of the city.

"Houston has a great heart... I will always work to bring all the heart of this city together," he said.

In a Nov. 4 election, Mr. Brown led a field of eight candidates with 42 per cent of the vote, short of the 50 per cent needed to win outright. He was followed by Mr. Mosbacher with 29 per cent.

Mr. Brown served as Houston police chief from 1982 to 1990. He was the city's first black police chief and is widely credited with reforming a police department that was plagued by scandal and charges of racism.

He instituted a policy called "neighbourhood oriented policing" and carried that theme into his mayoral campaign where he promised to strengthen the city's neighbourhoods through community involvement and investment in infrastructure.

Even though the mayor's post is nonpartisan, the campaign attracted a parade of national political figures, including Mr. Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, both of whom endorsed Mr. Brown.

Former President George Bush and wife Barbara came out in favour of Mr. Mosbacher and New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani weighed in with a slam at Mr. Brown for his handling of the crown heights riots in New York. Mr. Brown headed the New York Police Department from 1990 to 1992, when he left to join the Clinton administration.

He left the drug post and returned to Houston, in 1995 to teach at Rice University.

Mr. Brown succeeds popular incumbent Mayor Bob Lanier, who could not run again because of term limits.

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Third firefighter dies in Australian bush blaze

SYDNEY (R) — A volunteer firefighter died in an Australian hospital Sunday, hours after he collapsed while extinguishing small fires left after a bushfire in Sydney's south.

New South Wales (NSW) Rural Fire Services Commissioner Phil Koperberg told a news conference Sunday that 20-year-old Peter Edward Estcourt died 14 hours after being airlifted to hospital.

Estcourt became the third volunteer bushfire fighter to lose his life since a series of huge fires ravaged the NSW region a week ago.

A statement from the Sutherland Shire Council said members of Estcourt's brigade had reported seeing him carry a smouldering log just before he collapsed, but the exact cause of death had still not been determined.

The fires, mostly caused by lightning strikes on tinder-dry bush forests, reached the outskirts of Sydney last Tuesday, destroying about a dozen

homes.

Two volunteer fire-fighters were killed fighting a blaze near Lithgow, a town west of Sydney.

Altogether about 400,000 hectares of bush have been burned out.

Estcourt's death came as the fires had been brought under control and the clean-up operation had begun.

His father Gary, himself a volunteer fireman, said his son was a dedicated firefighter.

"Peter lived for the brigade," Gary said. "When he died, he was doing something he loved — helping other people and helping the community."

Mr. Koperberg said only 23 of the original 85 fires were still burning by Sunday night and none of the remaining blazes presented a major threat.

Huge Australian bushfires in January 1994 killed four people and destroyed more than 100 homes.



Russian rescue workers dig through frozen debris amongst the remains of a huge military cargo plane that crashed into an apartment block in the Siberian town of Irkutsk (Reuters photo)

2 more 'bird flu' cases emerge in Hong Kong

HONG KONG (AFP) — Health authorities called an emergency meeting here Sunday after the discovery of two more suspected cases of a rare strain of influenza previously thought to infect only birds, reports said.

A 54-year-old man who died Friday and a 13-year-old girl in critical condition were the two latest suspected cases, local newspapers said. If confirmed, it would bring the number of confirmed cases of the new H5N1 flu strain to four, with two deaths.

Two experts from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control arrived in Hong Kong Saturday and were to meet with local officials Sunday, the Hong Kong Standard reported.

The South China Morning Post reported that some experts feared the flu could cause a worldwide epidemic, and experts writing in the British scientific journal

Nature wrote in October that the strain must be closely monitored as it has "presently unknown pandemic potential."

The Standard quoted Daniel Lavanczy of the World Health Organisation headquarters in Geneva as saying the four victims had no contact with one another.

"But this is a new entity," he said. "These are the only four cases in the world and nobody knows the characteristics of the virus."

"This is a 50 per cent death rate, which is extremely high," he said. "Major diseases usually kill less than 10 per cent of the people."

When the disease first emerged earlier this year, killing a three-year-old boy and infecting a two-year-old, the Hong Kong government said the cases appeared to be isolated and posed no major threat to public health.

Company capitalises on Japanese passion for U.S.

CHICAGO (AFP) — Japanese teenagers are known to be avid fans of all things American, so much so that they think nothing of paying \$2,000 to \$3,000 for an old pair of Nike shoes or \$600 for a pair of pre-1970 Levi's jeans.

Robert Smith found that out during a two-year stint in Japan as a Mormon missionary in the mid-1980s and has since been providing a steady supply of vintage American shoes and clothes to meet the roaring demand from young Japanese.

"Japanese kids have an obsession with American culture. It's cool and hip, and they want to be a part of it," he said in an interview.

From his headquarters in a suburban Chicago hotel, Mr. Smith, chief financial officer of the Utah-based export firm Farley Enterprises, is masterminding a three-day buy-back of old Nike Air Jordans and other basketball and running shoes.

He has been criss-crossing the country in search of old pieces of Americana. Chicago is home to basketball superstar Michael Jordan and the Air Jordan shoes are particularly hot items in Japan. As a result, Chicago area kids — lured by newspaper ads promising up

to \$500 for old sneakers — have been flocking to Mr. Smith's command post at the hotel in suburban Schaumburg.

Prices are highest for Nikes made between 1985 and 1992 as well as 1995 Nike AirMax running shoes.

"Other prized items are Adidas tennis shoes made in Germany and France, 30-year-old Levi's jeans, old military bomber leather jackets and Hawaiian shirts from the 1940's and 1950's," Mr. Smith said.

"Thursday, I bought a pair of 1985 Nike Dunks for \$150. But I'm prepared to pay up to \$500 for an old pair," he told AFP.

Farley Enterprises, which has a staff of 30 employees and posted 3.2 million in sales last year, usually earns double what it pays for the goods it buys in the United States.

The goods acquired in the Chicago area will then be shipped to the Farley plant in Orem, Utah, where workers will photograph them and write descriptions in Japanese about colours, markings and other details.

The goods will then be auctioned off via the Internet on a Japanese-language web site, Mr. Smith said.

Crashed Russian plane is one of aviation's giants

MOSCOW (R) — The huge military freighter that crashed into a Siberian apartment block Saturday killing scores of people including all on board is the world's largest production aircraft.

The Antonov-124 "Ruslan" has a wingspan of more than 73 metres and is nearly 70 metres long. It has a maximum capacity of 120 tonnes and is regularly used to carry heavy cargo like satellites, automobiles and even other aircraft.

The craft that crashed Saturday was carrying two Sukhoi fighter jets to the far eastern city of Vladivostok. Interfax news agency said they were destined for export to Vietnam.

The four-engine Antonov is manufactured in the Ukrainian capital Kiev and in the central Russian city of Ulyanovsk.

The Antonov's features include an upward-hinged visor type nose and rear fuselage ramp-door allowing simultaneous loading and unloading of cargo.

Another of its unusual features is its rows of five wheels on each side of the fuselage under the wings, giving it a low-slung, chunky outline.

Its normal cruising speed is around 800 km per hour. Military experts at Jane's said 54 of the giant aircraft had been built by late 1995.

The plane's prototype first flew in 1982 and was exhibited at the 1985 Paris air show, Jane's said.

It is named Ruslan after a giant hero of Russian folklore immortalised by the 19th century poet Alexander Pushkin.

An-124 was used during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis to carry more than 400 Bangladeshi refugees home from the Middle East.

In October 1996 a freighter of this type crashed near the Italian

city of Turin after failing in its first landing bid.

Two crew members and two Italian villagers were killed in the crash.

Russian officials said at least 46 people had been killed in Saturday's accident after the craft

ploughed into an apartment block in Irkutsk-2, a satellite town of the Siberian city of Irkutsk, some 5,000 kilometres east of Moscow.

But Russian news agencies said the final death toll could be as high as 150. If the crash had taken place at night — when more people would have been at home — instead of mid-morning it would have been nearer 500, Interfax said.

A commission chaired by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin has been set up to investigate the causes of the accident.

ITAR-TASS news agency said one possibility was the failure of two engines on the left side of the plane. Yevgeny Sbaushnikov, an aviation aide to President Boris Yeltsin, said on Russian television the plane that crashed was 11 years old and had completed a similar flight just four days earlier.

The accident has again thrown a harsh spotlight on safety standards in Russian airspace where aviation officials say 219 people died last year in 43 separate accidents.

The surge in accidents is generally attributed to cash shortages which lower already poor maintenance standards and place extra pressure on air crews.

Saturday's accident took place near the scene of a January 1994 crash when 124 people aboard a Tupolev-154 plane, as well as a farmer on the ground, were killed.

One of its engines caught fire minutes after taking off from Irkutsk on a flight to Moscow.

Voters in Serbia casting ballots in presidential polls

BELGRADE (AFP) — Voters in Serbia began casting their ballots Sunday in presidential elections after an earlier race in October failed due to low turnout.

Polling stations opened at 7:00 a.m. (0600 GMT) and were due to close at 8:00 p.m. Sunday.

The vote is being contested by seven candidates though only three are main contenders to replace Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic who vacated the Serbian presidency in July after serving a maximum two terms.

Leading the field, according to the latest poll, is Yugoslav Foreign Minister Milan Milutinovic, the candidate of Mr. Milosevic's Socialist Party.

Just behind him is far-right leader Vojislav Seselj. He finished the invalidated Oct. 5 vote slightly ahead

of Mr. Milosevic's earlier preferred candidate, Zoran Djindjic, who stood down as Yugoslav president to make way for Mr. Milosevic.

The third main contender in Sunday's vote is Vuk Draskovic, the nationalist opposition leader, who was knocked out of the October presidential race. Although he has significant support, he would be a surprise victor.

Mr. Milutinovic, an old-school Communist bureaucrat who is ill at ease in public appearances, would have a tough time beating Mr. Seselj, a big, tall, populist with strong support among those in Serbia who are disaffected with Mr. Milosevic's rule.

Victory for Mr. Seselj would likely set Serbia on a collision course with the international community.

A former paramilitary leader in the wars in Croatia

and Bosnia, Mr. Seselj is against the Dayton Peace accords which ended the Bosnian conflict in 1995. He has also vowed to take back territory lost by his Serb brethren in Croatia in 1995 during a Croatian army blitz against rebel Serb-held areas.

Either move would send shock waves through the former Yugoslavia where internationally-backed peace initiatives that have partially penalised the Serbs for their leading role in starting the conflicts have helped give regional peace a chance.

For Sunday's vote to be valid turnout must exceed 50 per cent of Serbia's 7.2 million voters and the winner will be the candidate who takes more than half the votes.

If neither candidate wins Sunday, a run-off second round will be between the

two candidates who polled the most votes.

Failure in either the first or second rounds to breach the 50 per cent mark would mean a third election being staged after a pause of 60 days.

Low turnout in October was in part blamed on a boycott call by another opposition leader, Zoran Djindjic, who has again called for his supporters to stay away from the polls.

And 1.8 million ethnic Albanians from southern Serbian province Kosovo, will boycott the polls, as they have been doing since 1989 when Belgrade regime suppressed their autonomy.

The vote will be monitored by 30 experts from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The official results are expected Thursday.

Indian parties explore new alliances

NEW DELHI (AFP) — With elections barely three months away, India's myriad political parties are exploring marriages of convenience in a bid to strike it rich at the polls.

The country's three main power blocs are looking for new allies and alliances amid widespread fears that the fresh elections, due in February or March, will throw up another hung parliament.

Hindu nationalists, waiting in the wings to rule India, are scouting for regional partners who could give them strength in areas where they have been unable to expand their influence.

The Congress I, which looks bruised after toppling the coalition government of Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, has virtually conceded that it needs crutches to fight the electoral battle.

Mr. Gujral's centre-left United Front coalition also faces fissures.

The new polls for the Indian parliament were announced

last week after Mr. Gujral resigned on Nov. 28 when Congress took back support to his minority coalition it had propped up in April.

"The BJP (Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian People's Party) will need new allies in a bid to grab a majority in parliament," said G.V.L. Narasimha Rao, an election analyst.

The BJP now has four regional friends. But they had only 193 seats in the outgoing 545-member parliament.

A party or an alliance needs to control just over half the house for a stable government.

"In all probability there will be another hung parliament," election analyst Deepak Kumar told AFP. "All the parties know this. And they are preparing for the eventuality."

Saturday, the 112-year-old Congress, India's oldest party, said it favoured a broad secular front to take on the BJP, which is tipped to be the front-runner in the polls.

"If the secular forces are ready to co-ordinate with us, we would welcome it," Congress president Sitaram Kesri said.

Indian Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, a key member of Mr. Gujral's United Front, has already indicated he would join hands with the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state.

Mr. Yadav was once a bitter Congress enemy. A similar tie-up between the Congress and a former foe, Laloo Prasad Yadav, is likely in the neighbouring state of Bihar.

In West Bengal, a populous Communist citadel bordering Bangladesh, one Congress stalwart has warned of an unlikely alliance with Hindu nationalists to fight the Marxists.

The BJP is otherwise considered an "untouchable" by both the Congress and United Front for pursuing an aggressive pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim agenda.

A section of Gujral's Janata Dal (People's Party), however, may sail with the BJP in the eastern state of Orissa to jointly take on the Congress.

In the country's deep south, two Tamil parties — both members of the United Front — may part ways following differences over the links of one with Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas.

The conservative All India Muslim Conference could dump the Congress, its traditional partner in the southern state of Kerala, and opt for a coalition led by Communists.

The Hindu militant Shiv Sena, which rules Bombay, will stick to its alliance with the BJP in western India, but battle it out against the latter elsewhere in the country.

"These shifting alliances are the outcome of a desperate desire by people to retain their seats in parliament," said a Gujral supporter here.

"At times, it looks as if people are motivated only by self-interest, not ideology."

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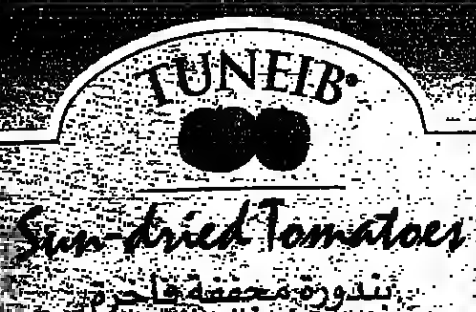
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Unity in the arena

THE ISLAMIC summit conference opening in Tehran tomorrow is significant on more than one front. Against the backdrop of rising Islamophobia, especially in the West, Muslims face formidable challenges not only to their unity of purpose but also their identity and well-being. It must be admitted that Muslim extremists who turned violent in the pursuit of their goals have distorted the humane image of Islam and helped set the stage for a new wave of anti-Islamic sentiments. This is why the true identity and nature of Islam as a religion of peace, humanitarianism and compassion need to be reasserted at the Tehran gathering. The world must no longer view Islam as the latest threat to the so-called new world order but rather as a driving force to cement solid global ties. But in order to achieve that, relations among the various Islamic countries should be examined and put on the right track.

Repeated attempts to forge a united front among the Muslim countries have unfortunately failed so far. Many of them are not only competing among themselves for leadership and even hegemony, a number of them have been at war with one another. The summit must recognise that it is never enough to pay lip service to Islamic unity, but that the faithful adherence to the true teachings of Islam is the only way to forge a united front for all Muslims, a front that is able to exert itself on the international arena.

A prime example why such a front is needed is the three Muslim states currently subjected to the most severe sanctions by the United Nations. Iraq, Libya and Sudan, intended to be an example for all, are the target of a concerted effort to weaken the Arab World. Iran has also been regarded as a threat to 'world security' and is accused of attempting to develop weapons of mass destruction; an accusation that has proven to carry along with its rhetoric severe consequences.

The major powers are effectively telling the weaker countries that only the members of the private club of a select number of nations may have these terrible weapons in their arsenals. No Arab or Muslim country is allowed admission to this minority club, and as a result the club maintains an upper hand on world politics especially the economy.

The Tehran meeting should reject this double standard in the most resolute way.

On the domestic front, the acts of barbarism being perpetrated in Algeria mar the image of Islam and must be brought to an end. Algeria has rejected international intervention to find a solution to the daily atrocities being committed, supposedly by the Islamists against their own people. This is where the Islamic conference can make a daring effort to put an end to the bloodbath in the North African Muslim country.

The Tehran meeting can establish respect worldwide by speaking openly and affirmatively against human rights violations and in support of pluralistic democracy. The true colour of Islam can never shine brightly unless and until the Muslim countries endorse human rights and champion democracy. The Muslim states must not be viewed as the bastions of totalitarianism or dictatorship. That is why the Tehran conference has to speak out boldly in favour of human rights and democracy as the number one priority issue on its agenda. If and when such an agenda becomes the basis for Islamic unity, the Islamic World will become an important player in the international arena: a player that can protect its interests in an arena where the players are so few.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Tareq Masarweh Sunday said Baghdad is justified in stopping the export of its oil because very little of the income from its oil sales benefits the Iraqi people. Only four per cent of the value of the oil sales goes to the Iraqis while 30 per cent goes to the U.N. and the countries which claim to have sustained losses as a result of the Gulf war, said the writer. Even the tiny portion of the oil sales destined for the Iraqi people does not arrive in the form of food and medicine because the U.S. keeps delaying the shipments, Masarweh said. He said what Iraq wants is a total lifting of sanctions so that it can bring in the amounts of food and medicine which are really needed for the Iraqi people, many of whom continue to die from disease and hunger. The Arab countries hold the key to the problem and they ought to end the sanctions if they are really concerned about the fate of their Iraqi brothers and sisters as they have been claiming, Masarweh said. He said the Arab states should take joint decisions on ending unjust embargoes, not only the one imposed on Iraq but also those slapped on Libya and Sudan.

Al Dustour's George Haddad said of Turkey's new invasion of northern Iraq that Ankara is clearly paving the way for reaching the oil fields of the Arab country — an old dream of Turkish rulers. Ankara is claiming that 20,000 troops are needed to stem further Kurdish rebel attacks on Turkish territory but in reality the Turks have other designs, the writer said, they aim at occupying large portions of Iraq including that country's oil fields with backing from Israel and the U.S., charged the writer. In fact, he said, Turkey is following in the footsteps of Israel which continues to occupy parts of Syria, and Lebanon under the pretext of ensuring security. Ankara, through the repeated attacks inside Iraq, is trying to create a self-declared security zone, following Israel's example in southern Lebanon according to the writer, who added that that will be the first step towards consecrating their efforts to achieve permanent occupation of parts of the Arab lands.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

A case of methodology

THE RECENT wrangle over the unemployment survey conducted by the Centre for Strategic Studies (CSS) of the University of Jordan has focused on the significant variance between the findings of the survey and that of the government. The CSS study estimated the unemployment rate for 1996 at 27 per cent while the official estimate of the government was 15 per cent. Of course the debate focused on methodology and consistency between the methods of the Department of Statistics and the CSS. The CSS asserted that it employed the standards of the International Labour Organisation. Thus, the debate shifted to credibility, not consistency.

Unfortunately, the press published brief summaries of the survey results with little reference to methodology. The tidbits that surfaced in the media, and which I could gather, stated that the unemployment rate of the survey was based on a sample of people aged between 15 and 64 years instead of the 18-60 age group that is usually sampled by the Department of Statistics, and that people were asked if they had been unemployed the day before the survey, which is rather strange (I do not know the period questioned by the Department of Statistics, however, it is most likely different from this extremely short period). In effect the CSS by choosing a 15-64 population increased the population of the sample, especially at the extremes where unemployment is highest. People who are very young (15 years of age) are less skilled and, hence, more likely to be unemployed than those who are 18 years old because the latter would have more human capital (training). Of course, people who are over 60 years old may suffer more discrimination on the job, and do exceed the eligibility retirement age in Jordan of 60. Therefore, they would be more likely to be

unemployed. Based on the difference in selecting the age groups alone, one can determine that the methods used in deriving the government and survey figures differed and hence the survey results cannot be compared — comparing both figures would be, from the statistical point of view, like comparing apples and oranges because they use two different populations in their calculations. (Just to complicate the matter further, a recent study that was conducted by the Department of Statistics in cooperation with the International Centre for Social and Applied Studies and Research, International Development Research of Canada and UNICEF used a sample of people between the ages 15-75).

Estimating unemployment rates can be a risky business because of political ramifications and because of the dissimilar methods by which they are calculated in different countries. In many European countries people are not counted as unemployed until they actually visit welfare departments to collect their unemployment checks. There is a danger with this method in that some people may have an aversion to being on welfare and not show up to collect their checks, and as a result they may not be counted as unemployed, thereby causing the unemployment rate to be understated. In the U.S. the number of unemployed is determined by the Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) using a survey covering approximately 55,800 households in 1973 counties and independent cities. To maintain consistency, the survey covers the week containing the 12th day of the month. The unemployment rate is released during the first week of the following month. As a result of these surveys people are classified into one of three groups: employed, unemployed and not in the labour force.

If a person is interviewed by the Census Bureau he/she would have been asked the following questions:

"During the week of the 12th through the 18th,

1. Did you work at least one hour for pay or profit?

2. Did you work more than 15 hours for no pay in a family business?

3. Did you have a job or business, but did not report to work because of illness, weather, labour disputes, vacation, or other personal reasons?"

If the answer was yes to any of the above questions then the person would have been considered employed. If the person answered "no" to all the above, two more questions are asked:

"Did you make specific efforts to find a job during the past month? Were you available for work this week (the week of the 12th through the 18th)?"

If the answers to both the questions were "yes," the interviewed would be considered unemployed. Otherwise, the person would be classified as a discouraged worker and would be dropped from the labour force (the labour force consists of all civilians, aged 16 years and older, who are not retired or institutionalised and who are either employed or actively looking and available for work).

For the sake of finding something as important as the unemployment rate, the method utilised by the CSS or the Department of Statistics or any other enterprise for that matter must be consistent with each other and be consistent over the historical record. Methodology, for that very reason, credits or discredits the findings of the best intended models. In a small country like Jordan, and given available resources, highly accurate and unified estimates can be obtained for the benefit of the whole.

For Russians, Iraq and Iran aren't the problem

By Thomas L. Friedman

MOSCOW — Sometimes you can tell a lot about a country by what is on the front pages of its newspapers. Sometimes you can tell even more by what is on the back.

Here is back-page news: The pilots of a helicopter based in Yessentuki, in southern Russia, had not been paid for so many months that on Nov. 22 they flew their chopper to a secluded spot and hid it. They said they would return it only when they received their back pay.

Or this: Employees of the Ministry of Atomic Energy, the folks responsible for maintaining nuclear warheads, have not been paid in 10 weeks.

Discovering what is back-page news in Russia helps one better understand (although not accept) why Russia responds differently than America to the prospects of Iran or Iraq acquiring weapons of mass destruction. To put it simply: Russia is otherwise engaged.

It is hard to worry about Iraq's weapons when your nuclear employees are going unpaid and crews are hiding their helicopters. As the Washington Post Moscow correspondent David Hoffman remarked to me, "Russia today is like a blender with the top off and the motor running." We want them to just flip a switch and stop everything from spewing out, but it's not so easy.

America and Russia today are in different worlds, and

that is new.

During the cold war, America and Russia were playing on the same global chessboard, with the same pieces, nuclear weapons, and with the same stakes, global control. They took every regional crisis equally seriously.

With the end of the cold war, two changes have occurred. First, the balance of power between the United States and Russia is no longer measured by nukes alone but by economic and technological strengths, in which the United States is far, far superior. Russia is still in its Wild Bill phase and America is in its Bill Gates phase.

Iraq and Iran for America

Vyacheslav Mironov, "Russia simply does not consider Iranian Muslim fundamentalists the worst thing in the world."

For Russia, the Saudi fundamentalists are worse because the Saudis supported the Chechen separatists.

For Russia, the second worst are the Taliban fundamentalists in Afghanistan. Since the Iranians oppose both the Saudis and Taliban, they are good for Russia.

Also, in the dispute over how Caspian Sea oil will be divided, Iran is allied with Russia and Turkmenistan, against Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

The fact that the Russians are not with America 100 per cent does not mean they

to excuse it. Indeed, the United States must hold Russia's feet to the fire, without mercy, when it comes to preventing Iraq or Iran from acquiring nukes. I don't care what Russia's unique interests are. This is a global interest.

To understand this, though, is to appreciate that in managing relations with Russia there will be areas of overlap and areas of discord. And those overlaps and discords will be driven not by ideological competition, as in the cold war, but by differences in geography, history and income.

The Cold Warriors who want to treat Russia as though it is still and will always be an irredeemable foe will be blind to the potential benefits of working with Russia in some areas. Russophiles who want to treat Russia as a fellow Western democracy will be blind to the dangers inherent in Russia's very different circumstances.

As the Johns Hopkins foreign policy expert Michael Mandelbaum points out, Russia and China are now the same problem — two post-Communist powers with their own regional interests, some of which overlap with America's, others of which conflict. The only way to manage both is by building bridges where possible and drawing red lines where necessary.

International Herald Tribune

...in managing relations with Russia there will be areas of overlap and areas of discord.

are twin evils. For Russia they are sources of back pay. Iraq owes Russia \$7 billion.

Second, the United States and Russia today are no longer playing on the same global chessboard. They are each playing on many different chessboards. Some overlap, some do not. For instance, says the Russian foreign policy expert

are against America 100 per cent. This is not the return of the cold war. It is the essence of the post-cold war. That is why we get these ambiguous outcomes: Russia persuades Saddam Hussein to let the U.N. weapons inspectors back in, but only to hasten the day when the sanctions can be lifted and Russia gets paid. To understand this is not

A vote to ratify

To the Editor:

IT SEEMS that there is a flurry of activities at the moment regarding refugee law. I believe that the time is ripe to raise the issue of Jordan's ratification of the relevant international instruments concerning refugees. Specifically, I have in mind the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

The reasons for such ratification are multiple. They include domestic, international and humanitarian concerns.

Domestically, Jordanian society is in the process of moving from the rule of whim and political expedience to the rule of law. One of the main features of the rule of law is predictability based on binding, definable sets of legal principles. In other words, legal status and entitlements, under the rule of law model, should be rule bounded: they should be predictable and attainable upon the satisfaction of certain legal criteria with no further scope of discretion by the decision maker. In the case of the refugees covered by the '51 Convention (who, incidentally, do not include Palestinian refugees), this means a right to refugee status based on meeting the set definition of 'well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, nationality, religion, political opinion or membership of a particular social group.' While Jordanian past experience does, indeed, show 'continued endeavours towards housing refugees and providing essential services over the past decades,' this is not enough to meet the 'predictability' test of the rule of law. Past practice is no substitute to rights enshrined in law. Furthermore, since the rule of law is indivisible, failure to achieve it in any area, refugees included, would jeopardise the whole process.

LETTERS

Internationally speaking, the '51 Convention is an essential pillar of the international humanitarian regime. It is already ratified by more than 130 states. Many of its rules, such as the non-refoulement principle, are already binding on Jordan as customary international law. Jordan's position, remarkably through the work of HRH Crown Prince Hassan, as an advocate of further harmonization of the international regime is unfortunately weak-

Human Rights File

The right to food gaining wider recognition

By Waleed M. Sadi

THE U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) had an occasion during its current session in Geneva to discuss the so-called right to food. The U.N. human rights community has been pushing for international recognition of this right as a separate and distinct right that can stand on its own merits. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights deals with the right to food under the umbrella subject of adequate standard of living as outlined in Article 11 of the covenant.

Till this moment in time, the right to food has been examined and dealt with in the context of other related rights such as the right to life, to work, to housing, to health, etc. In a way that would be the proper manner of discussing the right to food since it cannot be functionally separated from other related human rights. Yet the U.N. Sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, an auxiliary body of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, has designated a special rapporteur to elaborate and amplify the right to food as a distinct right that deserves special recognition and implementation.

For starters, the human rights experts who spoke on the subject were unsure what basket of basic foods the "right to food" would address. There are cultural differences between peoples on what constitutes a basic staple of food. When this criteria can be agreed upon, the legislative context of the right to food will also require additional reflection. There were voices that asserted that there should be a legal recognition of the right to food. Others replied that the mere mention of the right to food as a legally enforceable right, would imply an obligation on the state to provide food.

At this juncture the addition of the element of "duty" was suggested as another dimension to the equation. By that it meant that the people in question seeking the enjoyment of the right to food also have a duty to feed themselves according to their means. For those who are too poor, however, the state would be obligated to make basic food items available to them at no cost. For those people who are poverty-stricken or living below the poverty line, there would be no escape from the conclusion that food subsidies would become necessary. In this context, it was pointed out that the current policy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is to convince states to phase out food subsidies altogether even when poverty and unemployment are rampant in the country. This rang a bell since we in Jordan had experienced a similar IMF request that resulted in riots in the southern parts of the country.

If on the other hand this right to food is pushed to its logical conclusion, there is no escape from a collision course between the U.N. human rights community and IMF on food subsidies. As a matter of fact the kind of free market economy that countries are encouraged to adopt runs counter to the thrust of newly developed human rights jurisprudence. The right to food could be just one example where there could be clash between two perspectives, one that thinks in terms of raw economic factors and the other which advocates human development with a human face.

We have seen such a clash at the Kyoto conference on global warming where the voices of commerce and trade within Washington have triumphed over those who wanted to give the highest priority to global environment. The U.S. delegation had candidly made an argument contending that phasing out fossil fuel would hurt the U.S. economy. In other words, never mind polluting the air, water and space on planet Earth even to the point of no return as long as the immediate business concerns are met.

The right to food cannot be separated from environmental control because at the rate we are all destroying the eco-system on Earth, there will be no room to recognise the right to food much less to enforce it. The greenhouse gases that are constantly emitted by industries, vehicles and the like will make sure that most human rights including the right to food would be rendered academic at the end of the tunnel.

The relevant article in the covenant is of course Article 11 which reads as follows: "The states parties to the present covenant recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The states parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realisation of this right..."

The second paragraph of this provision stipulates that "The states parties to the present covenant, recognising the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger..." Needless to add that states parties such as Jordan are obligated under Article 2 to begin immediately to take measures towards the full enjoyment by everyone of all the rights in the covenant by all appropriate means, including the adoption of legislative measures. It would be interesting to try to reconcile the decision of our own government to lift food subsidies with this requirement under the covenant. Even more vexing is the issue of economic sanctions against such countries as Iraq and Libya and their negative effect on the realisation of the right to food. But as the Australian chairman of the Committee on the Covenant has aptly observed recently, major capitals go to the U.N. Security Council or the General Assembly purposely forgetful of their obligations under the covenant. The effective remedy for all these national and international omissions is to keep reminding them of their treaty obligations with the hope that one day the message will soak in at least.

ened by its failure to ratify the '51 Convention. Ratification of the relevant international instruments will ensure that Jordan is in full conformity with the international will, and that its leading humanitarian position is not compromised on technicalities.

Last, but by no means least, are humanitarian considerations. Charity is probably one of the greatest injuries to human dignity. It is for the precise purpose of replacing 'compassion' with obligation, and charity with rights that the refugee conventions were formulated. These conventions are aimed at providing legal, physical, and socio-economic protection that recognises the specific vulnerabilities of refugees. There is great danger that dealing with refugees solely under the general human rights regime might lead to disregard to their specific needs.

It is for these reasons that Jordan should take the step of formalising its humanitarian refugee stance by moving it from the realm of morality and politics to the realm of rights and law.

Ghaith Al-Omari
Wolfson College
University of Oxford

Earthquake drills: A precaution for all

By Richard Tanner

WE VISITED the new Earthquake Centre near Eighth Circle. Its location in the basement of the new block at the National Resource Centre is an improvement; when it was on the top floor over the geological museum, the seismographs picked up the rumble of loaded lorries on the road to Wadi Seer. Staff extended their usual friendly welcome for what has become an annual visit for International Baccalaureate School students studying earthquakes as part of their geography programme. Earthquakes certainly pose a hazard, though not as much as many fear.

Jordan lies on one side of the Rift Valley. Our main movement is northwards as convection currents beneath Arabia carry us away from Somalia. The Red Sea too is splitting, pushing Arabia away from Africa, making the final direction north-north-east. This bumps us along the rift with Palestine. Though the movement is usually smooth, should the Arabian 'plate' stick, sudden release of tension causes an earthquake, we were told.

Our last serious one was in November 1995! Remember it well as we'd been visiting the Centre — Jordan Seismological Observatory, to give it the official title, but who can pronounce or spell that? — returned to school to report no tremors then, next day, bang! Somehow the Geography Dept. always gets blamed for these things.

Last year's visit proved equally exciting. Just as

we were leaving, I suggested we check the seismographs again when suddenly P and S waves shuddered across the drums. I expected all hell to break loose — alarms, telephones, civil defence calls — but the experts stayed calm. It was only 4.5 on the Richter Scale so nothing to worry about. Good, in fact, for pressure build-up was being released.

Small though it was, that earthquake stimulated Grade 11 geographers to plan a school earthquake drill. We studied the civil defence's instructions of 13/10/93, checked newspaper reports of Nuweiba which showed that half the deaths there were preventable and found Japanese drill instructions to compare with Jordanian ones, then planned our campaign. The students decided what to tell their colleagues, felt that a full assembly would be too impersonal so visited tutor rooms explaining the need to know and what precautions should be taken, and that they would conduct a drill later in the week.

Just before the appointed hour, the students took up monitoring positions in corridors to record what happened when the alarm bell (earthquake) sounded. They reported most students diving under desks (to avoid falling glass, ceiling tiles, cables, etc.) and teachers in doorways (strong structures from which to control movement of students). Slow reactions and no reactions, disorders and ignorance were also recorded and a report sent to senior administrators.

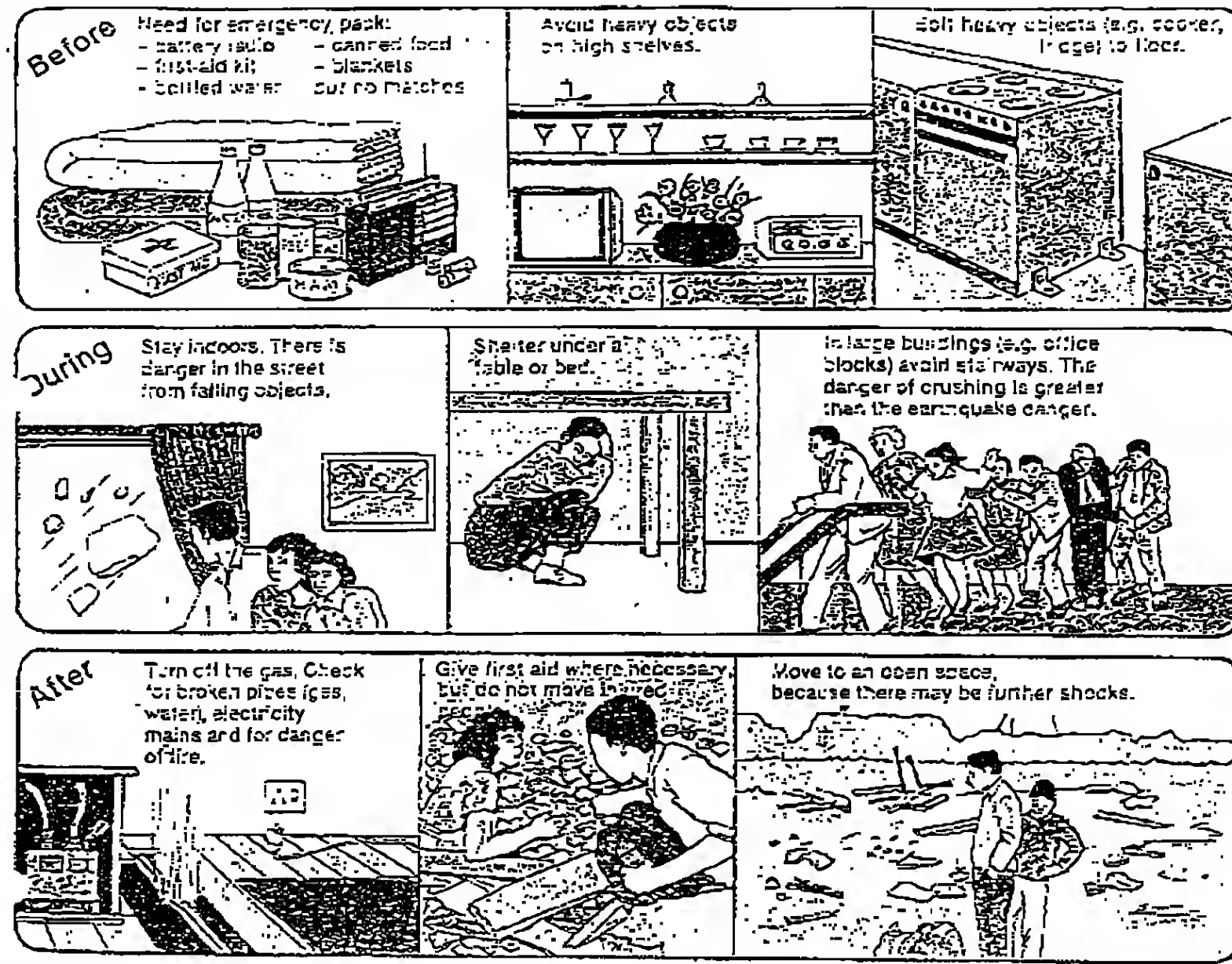
We didn't evacuate the school as we practise fire drills regularly, so the whole life-saving exercise lasted about 5 minutes. Having repeated it in 3 successive years, I doubt if any student will leap from an upper floor, rush screaming into a corridor, fall in a crush at the foot of some stairs or be cut by flying glass if and when the big one strikes.

The year 1927 brought our last serious earthquake, when maybe 600 of the 250,000 population died. Their rigid and weak-structured buildings collapsed, killing many occupants, panic set in, emergency services were primitive, but plague and starvation did not follow. Our students wonder if, in our large and complex society, we'll do better when the next big one occurs. Are all schools educating their students about the earthquake hazard? Do offices and factories reinforce school drills with annual practices of their own? Are our emergency services prepared for disaster in cities the size and complexity of modern Amman, Zarqa and Irbid? Will our water pipelines fracture leaving firemen unable to put out fires like those which destroyed San Francisco in 1906 and Kobe in January 1995? Are less stable areas avoided by builders in Jordan? Will the steel rods allow the pillars which hold our buildings up to flex? Will the limestone cladding stuck onto most new buildings simply fall off, like my bathroom tiles, killing people in the streets and blocking them with debris?

We hope so. Meanwhile our students are learning

Survival?

Chances of surviving an earthquake can be increased by taking precautions.



about the need for precautions and being conditioned to make safe responses. They're learn-

ing from their peers who themselves are researching the need and the reactions, how to plan, present

and monitor dissemination of information, and to report and evaluate the outcome. We hope other

schools are doing their bit too. The writer, an ex-principal of a British school, teaches

at the Amman Baccalaureate School. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

Automobiles: The more things change, the more they stay the same

By Raja Gargour

THROUGH THE classic automotive business, I learnt a long time ago that there is very little new under the sun when it comes to automobile mechanics.

For example, if you own a brand new state-of-the-art-aerodynamically shaped car with a super-charged twin cam engine, with front wheel or 4 wheel drive, and possibly a four-wheel steering, you may be surprised to learn that all these concepts are as old as your Great Grandfather.

Let's begin with the engine: Your latest model twin overhead-cam engine was first designed and built by Peugeot in... 1912!

Winning a few early races, the Peugeot design was slowly copied by numerous makers including Bentley and eventually just about every carmaker in the world. Four-wheel drive? Many of the popular sport utility vehicles running around over pavement and dirt roads have 4x4 systems. Well, this idea was originally produced in — of all places — Holland in 1902! The Dutch Spyker car not only had four-wheel drive, but was also the first car with a 6-cylinder engine and four-wheel brakes.

That's produced, and not invented. Four-wheel drive was really pioneered way before then, in the 1820s on steam coaches.

Front-wheel drive? This idea originated by the horse and cart. The horse pulls the

cart and does not push it. A number of front-wheel drive motorcycles were made in the 1890s, and by 1920 the English Alvis and Tracta cars were front-wheel drive models.

Miller and Cord of the United States made incredible strides in the 1920s to make the system work, followed by Citroen of France with their 'Traction Avant' model, and in the sixties, the ultra-successful Mini. Nowadays, most Japanese and small European cars are front-wheel drive.

O.K., so how about supercharging (artificially pressing air into the engine)? The idea surfaced as far back as 1901 and was made effective in 1909!

World War I perfected the concept on aeroplane engines, and by the 1920s all racing cars were supercharged, starting with Mercedes-Benz.

If you think four-wheel steering is definitely high-tech, sorry to disappoint you again. This time it was 1925, when a certain Pietro Amati (never heard of since) made a car with four-wheel steering which immensely improved maneuverability.

You might logically think that aerodynamic design was invented in the wind tunnel, but here again, it was men with strong beliefs that made all the difference: Camille Jenatton designed an electric streamlined car in 1899 and broke the speed record at 108 Kph!

However it was only until 1938 that Mr. Kamm designed the first practical aerodynamically shaped

salon car, and the whole world followed.

So as you see, none of these ideas are new. Nonetheless, it is the advancement in materials and electronics that allow today's cars to reliably incorporate the great inventions of the past.

The writer is a classic car consultant in Amman. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.



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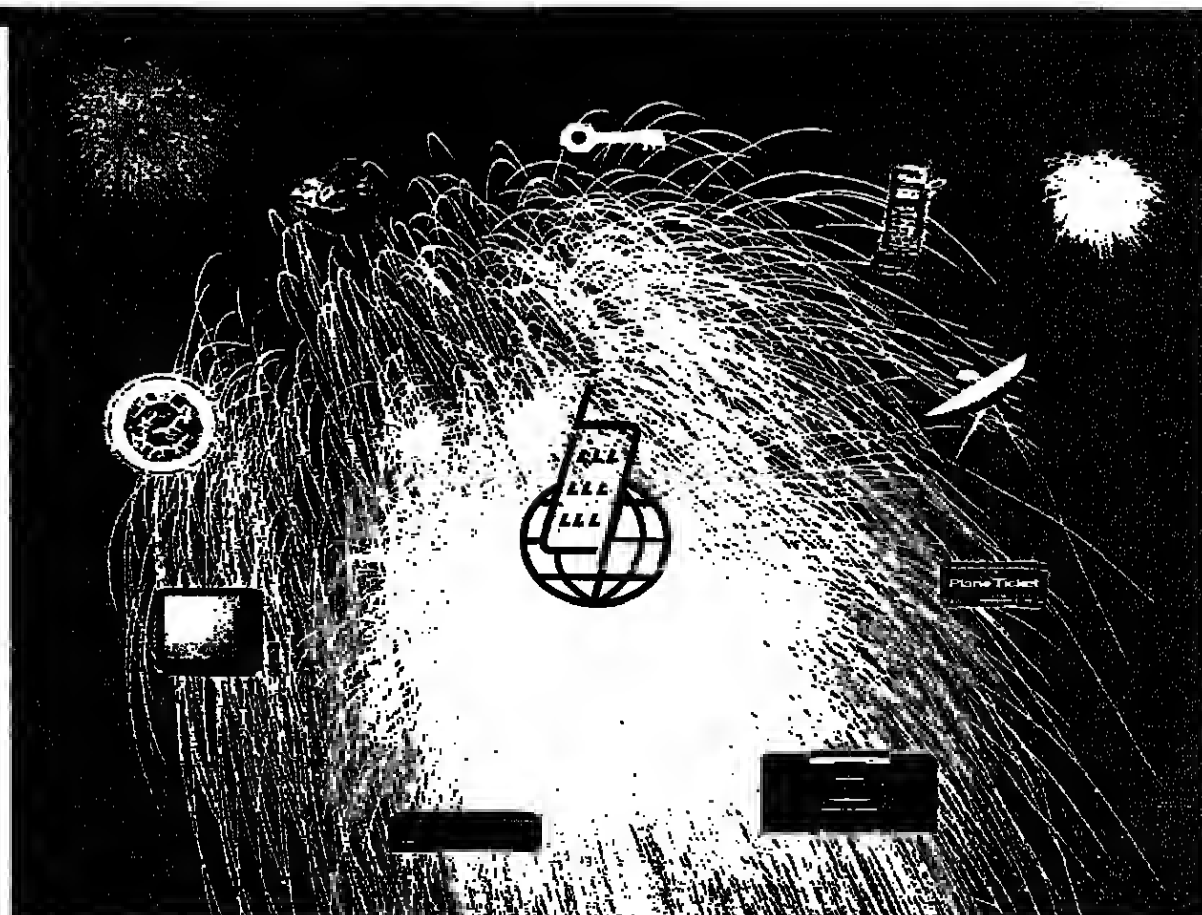
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Ministry of Finance clarifies procedures for payments

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Finance Sunday denied reports in the local press about its failure to settle dues of various government departments which, according to these reports, have disrupted the arrival of supplies to these departments.

The Ministry of Finance is committed to carrying out its public services and at the same time maintaining control over public funds and monitoring expenditure in line with the provisions of the fiscal budgets, a ministry spokesman stressed.

Reports and editorial columns in the local press have recently reported that the Ministry of Finance's failure to pay the bills of some government depart-

ments has resulted in complaints from these institutions of not receiving fuel, water and electricity or hospitals becoming short of medical supplies.

To clarify the confusion about this issue, the spokesman outlined the following points:

1- The Ministry of Finance is committed to implementing the 1997 fiscal budget law which provides for the way expenditure is done by the concerned departments.

2- The Ministry of Finance always insists that government departments be committed to spending from their respective revenues and allocations.

3- Some government departments have been

found to be using their allocated funds for water, electricity, telephone and travel expenses for purposes other than what have been allocated for originally.

4- Many government departments have owed settled their bills after the Ministry of Finance has reiterated that instructions about the expenditure be respected.

5- As to the purchases of medicine and medical equipment, this is the concern of the health insurance fund which operates from an independent budget.

The spokesman said that the Finance Ministry is determined to cooperate with the various government departments to help them avoid overspending.

IMF races to fund S. Korea

WASHINGTON (R) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has pushed South Korea onto a new economic track with its \$57 billion rescue plan, racing against the clock to prevent Seoul falling into default.

But the coming weeks will tell whether and how fast the deal will work. If all goes well Seoul will be \$11 billion better off by the middle of next month, although it must agree to painful changes to the way it runs its once-booming economy.

If things go badly, from the international point of view, Asia's subprime financial crisis could get even worse, spreading its tentacles to other countries in Asia and beyond.

Countries as far away as Russia and Brazil have already suffered from the Asian fallout. Russia is seeking help from commercial banks to bail out its shaky economy. Brazil staved off

the speculators for now with a tough programme of reforms.

"These were difficult negotiations as the programme required a quantum leap in policies," IMF First Deputy Managing Director Stanley Fischer told a news conference last Friday after the fund approved its \$21 billion share of the record-breaking South Korean deal.

"The drama of these negotiations resulted from the realization about the alarming state of foreign reserves... when we were invited in, Korea was possibly 10 days away from a financial catastrophe."

The deal was signed, sealed and the money delivered in record time, and the IMF board met into the night last Thursday to decide whether to approve the loan.

Seoul has already received a first payment of \$5.6 billion and a further \$3.6 billion will be made available from Dec.

18, after a first review of the economic reform programme agreed with the IMF. A second review follows on Jan. 8 and another \$2 billion could then be handed over.

But the picture is clouded by doubts about whether South Korea's powerful trade union movement will accept the painful changes the government says it will make and about what will happen after South Korea's presidential election on Dec. 18 — the day for the first review.

IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus, who participated in some of the long negotiating sessions in Seoul, took the unusual step of asking candidates in the poll to declare their backing for the IMF reform programme.

"This is a complicated issue. We are initiating the largest programme in our history two weeks before a presidential election," Mr. Fischer said.

"The needs of Korea were extraordinary and it means that disbursements will be made in a period of a month that are bigger than most any other programme we have ever had. It was therefore essential that the managing director could be able to assure the board that the programme would be carried out."

We needed assurances that the programme would be supported by whoever was in the government."

South Korea, the world's 11th largest economy, was the fourth Asian tiger economy to turn to the IMF to help it recover from a crisis of confidence and a crisis in an over-extended banking sector. A short-term debt crisis had raised the spectre of default.

Seoul's promises to the IMF are concentrated on financial sector reforms and promises to allow foreign investors to take larger stakes in domestic firms and local markets. A final timetable is not ready yet, but Mr. Fischer said this would be worked out over the coming weeks.

U.S. President Bill Clinton said on Friday that the international response to the Asian crisis had been appropriate. "They have hit a rough patch, but the underlying potential for production in Asia is enormous," he said.

Malaysia announces emergency measures

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — The Malaysian government has announced emergency economic measures to deal with the collapse of its currency and equity markets while slashing its growth forecast for the coming year.

Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim said the measures were endorsed at a cabinet meeting and were particularly aimed at addressing problems in the private sector resulting from the rapid growth of credit.

"Now the decision should be economic. We have to deal with the political and social problems later," he told reporters. "We don't have a choice and we have to take these tough measures to help ourselves boost the economy. These measures will allow us to bring back confidence."

Financial markets immediately cheered the news, with the Malaysian currency jumping to 3,720 ringgit within minutes of the

announcement, up from 3,7700 shortly before and a new all-time low of 3,8650 ringgit earlier in the day.

Traders said there were rumours of Bank Negara Malaysia intervention although dealers in Singapore said the central bank was only checking rates.

Local share prices also rose following news of the announcement which came an hour before the market's close.

A dealer at a local brokerage said many were relieved that International Monetary Fund (IMF) help had not been sought by Malaysia following similar moves by Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea following the collapse of regional currencies in recent months.

"Obviously we will have to undergo a period of slow-down before things get on track again," he added.

Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) is now expected to grow by no

more than 5.0 per cent in the coming year, down from the September budget forecast of seven per cent, Anwar said. For this year, GDP growth is forecast to expand by 7.5 per cent to 7.7 per cent, down from 8.0 per cent as predicted.

Mr. Anwar, who is also deputy prime minister, said that government spending would be subjected to "more major cuts across the board" as revenues would be "drastically reduced" as a result of the sharp economic slowdown next year.

He also said that bank lending to the construction sector would be frozen, with the exception of low to medium-cost housing, with banks required to channel loans to the more productive areas of the economy.

Mr. Anwar added that Bank Negara had already "reprimanded" several banks for certain lending activities and that central bank Governor Ahmad Mohamad Don held a meeting with commercial banks last week.

The downward revisions in Malaysia's GDP growth forecasts follow economic data in November which

showed the economy had begun to "slide" in contrast to September and October when the government was "still confident," he said.

Mr. Anwar said there was "no question of bailouts" for any corporate group and that authorities would even allow insolvencies among financial institutions.

"I have sympathy," the finance minister said. "I don't want to see these guys go bankrupt. But there is a limit."

He admitted that securities companies "do have problems" but said the central bank was "still confident" about the financial position of banks.

The finance minister said he would also issue a "clarification" on reported remarks by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, which spooked foreign exchange markets and sent the ringgit tumbling to new all-time lows recently.

Mr. Anwar said the proposed \$2.7 billion "land bridge" linking northern Malaysia, southern Thailand and the island of Langkawi would be deferred although a related

gas pipeline project with Thailand was likely to proceed.

Mr. Mahathir reportedly has said the project would go ahead despite the ringgit's recent depreciation which has caused many other projects to be deferred. Although he did not say when the project would proceed, the reports sent the ringgit into a tailspin and a new low of 3.73 to the dollar.

Mr. Anwar said that unlike Thailand and Indonesia, the employment outlook remained bright in Malaysia and that any workers retrenched would be "redeployed" to the plantation sector where labour shortages are still acute.

"We will continue to have full employment," he said. Mr. Anwar added, however, that the government would be "very tough" with illegal workers and was already discussing the issue with Indonesia where most illegal workers are from.

But foreign workers legally residing in Malaysia will be redeployed to other sectors if they lose their jobs, he said.

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Chantilly Chocolatier soon in the market

CHANTILLY CHOCOLATIER have signed a franchise agreement with Golden Ribbon company represented by Mr. Ihab Amari and Mr. Rajai Mselis, making Golden Ribbon the sole representative for Chantilly Chocolatier in Jordan. Chantilly Chocolatier will be opening at Deir Ghbar before Christmas & Ramadan. Its advertising campaign will be handled by STYLE Advertising Agency.

PROVOCATIVELY

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DAJANI Jewellers

Amra Forum Hotel Shops, Amman.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Relative through marriage
- Catherine of Aragon
- Knight's title
- In that place
- Audience divider
- In favor
- Depiction of humanity
- Talkie tunes
- Head-to-head competitions
- Very
- Low-to-the-ground hounds
- Torched
- Half dentures
- Monotonous
- Shirts up
- Dutch flower
- Orleans
- Oregon's capital
- Columbian
- Bombard
- Diligent insect
- Casale's
- Instrument
- Reflected light
- Fishy team of the NHL
- Prescription info
- "The Last of..."
- Moment
- Bryan Brown movie
- Desert growth
- Tedious details
- In the past
- First light
- Sleed
- Midwest airport
- Single classic
- Dined
- More tender
- Junction of sloping surfaces

DOWN

- Possessive pronoun
- Blackhawk's org.
- Luau loop
- Trajectory
- Gardens often
- Coffee shop
- Small brook
- Egyptian goddess
- Pole
- Replenish supplies
- Education hiatus
- Full of wrath
- Lassoed
- Inning enders
- Container with a tap
- Myanmar, previously
- Of bees
- Blink
- Potential plant
- Feature of a fad
- Chicago team
- Alternative to butter
- Lecture
- Picture in the mind
- First to spot a comet
- Vaccines
- "Born Free" lioness
- Persian's kin
- Likes
- Broadway success
- Bond pic
- Table runner
- The Netherlands
- He's Angel, e.g.
- Carson's predecessor
- Plot of land
- Pl follower
- Half of MGR
- Say more
- Purchased hair
- French born

Peanuts

EVERY VETERANS DAY I GO OVER TO BILL MAULDIN'S HOUSE.

WE QUAFF A FEW ROOT BEERS, THEN I TELL HIM WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY.

I WENT TO A BOOKSTORE TO GET SOMETHING BY ERNEST PYLE. THEY NEVER HEARD OF HIM.

I DON'T KNOW, BILL... I JUST DON'T KNOW.

Andy Capp

DID HE DO ANYTHING ABOUT THAT JOB I FOUND FOR HIM?

YES, MUM.

HE GOT IT?

NOT EXACTLY, MUM.

HUH! BET HE DIDN'T EVEN GIVE IT A THOUGHT!

HE DID! AND STOP REPEATING ON THE LAD!

HE GAVE IT SO MUCH THOUGHT HE WAS TOO WORKED OUT TO GO AFTER IT.

Mutt'n'Jeff

OK, NOW TRY IT YOURSELF! YOU'LL GET IT! BACK - HOLD IT! PULL FORWARD A LITTLE!

EASY! WATCH IT! BACK A LITTLE! NOW FORWARD - TURN YOUR WHEEL SHARP!

OH, THE HECK WITH IT, MUTT! COME ON, LET'S WALK TO THE CURB!

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're lucky, forceful and dynamic. Things won't go exactly as you expect, but that's OK. Leave room for surprises. Action you take now will have positive results. Late tonight, you'll use skills you acquired the hard way. Listen to an older woman. Her advice is right on target.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're under a bit of pressure. You like things to be peaceful, calm and quiet, but that's not likely to happen today. You may feel like you're in the middle of a combat zone. Don't let it get you down or make you nervous. Just do what needs to be done.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) This is a great day for a party. You and your friends are in a festive mood. If you've got nice things you don't want damaged, cut your guest list down to just a few of your very dearest friends. Even better, have a party just for the two of you. That could get very interesting.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Don't let the turkeys get you down. The cranberry sauce doesn't have to be traumatic, either. It looks like you're going into the mid-holiday dithers. Disregard a demanding older person's reckless whims. Just do it the way you always do and everybody will be happy.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You can learn something from another person's experience today, without having to go through the whole thing yourself. This could show up as more money in your pocket. A partner's innovative idea could bring in more money as well. Solicit suggestions from friends and co-workers; you'll get some valuable ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) The spotlight is on you again. It looks like people want to give you money. They're giving you more work, too. You don't seem to be overjoyed by the prospect. That's probably due to your insistence on perfection. Don't worry. You'll be able to pull it off again. That's your area of expertise. You're good at it.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You've been coming up against your old barriers, and plowing right through them. Well, some you've had to go around, and some you may have had to climb over. Some you might just leave there, of as historical monuments. The point is, you don't have to drag them wherever you go.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be careful of your temper today, especially if a co-worker is behaving in a rude manner. Your anxiety level is just a little higher than usual, that's all. Don't let somebody else's emergency cause you to make a mistake you'll regret later.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're expected to do a job perfectly for somebody else today. A very critical person is watching to see if you make any mistakes. You're more in a partying frame of mind. Take that enthusiasm, plus your own good sense, and push towards the goal.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You could have the chance to travel. This is a little upsetting, since there's so much to be done at home. That's OK. The stuff at home will get done whether you're there or not. Go ahead and take a risk, just for the fun of it.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You're not a person who worries much about money; that's how you manage to spend so much with so little to show for it. Today, however, you can turn that around. You'll have the opportunity to make an excellent deal. You'll need to be at the right place at the right time, but you can make that happen. Go for it.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is a good day to ask for a raise. You might even get one without asking. If you've been keeping up with demands, you've made it obvious that you're valuable. Let people know you're a team player, and you're there to help. Do what you love and the money will follow.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise - Zircon

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

MY FATHER NEVER HUGGED ME WHEN I WAS A CHILD.

YOUR FATHER NEVER HUGGED ME EITHER, BUT DO I WHINE ABOUT IT?

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

KRYJE

NOANY

SAYLE

LYNKIG

Print answer here: THE

Yesterday's Jumble: CHUTE CYNIC SCHEME JETSAM Answer: What Mom enjoyed while doing the laundry - "SHEET" MUSIC

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordanian products are still not available in Palestinian markets

**** ACCORDING TO Abdul Fanah Al Kayed, the director of the Jordanian Commercial Coordination office, in Ramallah, the Jordanian industry in the Palestinian territories has not taken its real role and it is not available in the markets. "The bilateral trade exchange volume is very weak and the Jordanian exports do not exceed JD5 million," Mr. Kayed said.**

Noting that there has been a noticeable rise in Palestinian exports to Jordan, Mr. Kayed indicated that his office aims at serving businessmen and industrialists from both sides and at solving difficulties facing them. He said that the office was willing to help any Palestinian company willing to export to Arab countries via Jordan after Palestinian goods were allowed to cross Jordan in transit to Arab states.

Mr. Kayed said Jordanian cement was the only product that directly enters to the Palestinian territories and that contacts are being intensified to facilitate the trade exchange between Jordanian industrialists and Palestinian merchants including opening letters of credit. (Al Arab Al Yawm).

Dalabih confident Aqaba port can compete with Latakia, Tartous

**** PORTS CORPORATION Director General Mohammad Dalabih is confident that the port of Aqaba can compete with Syrian ports despite the higher cost of shipping goods from Europe. He explained that the higher capacity of Aqaba port means that it can unload the shipments three times as fast the time needed at the Syrian, ports of Latakia and Tartous. As such, he clarified, the Aqaba port can overcome the higher cost resulting from the longer route and the fees for crossing the Suez Canal.**

"If we are talking about a grain shipment of around 60,000 tonnes, I think it will take between 15 to 16 days to unload it whereas we can unload it in six days," Captain Dalabih said. "As such, the time difference covers the costs such as the Suez Canal fees." He went on to say that as far as imports coming from Asia "there is no one who can compete with us."

Captain Dalabih ruled out any intention to lower Aqaba port fees but he said that the cost of land transport, which involves more than 8,000 trucks, "may be needing a modification." (Al Ra'i).

U.S. opens door for Al Hikma products

AMMAN (J.T.) — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has opened the door for Dar Al Hikma pharmaceutical firm to export raw materials used in the manufacture of drugs to the American markets. Al Hikma General Manager Mazen Darwazah announced Sunday.

Addressing a press conference, Mr. Darwazah said the approval was given following an FDA team's visit to Jordan during which its members inspected the Dar Al Hikma facilities and examined the raw materials used in the medicine and found them responding to the right specifications and standards.

With this approval, Dar Al Hikma has just



Mazen Darwazah speaking during the press conference

completed a project in Riyadh jointly with a Saudi firm at the cost of \$30 million and production will start next year. Medicines will be marketed in Saudi Arabia and the surplus will be exported to neighbouring countries.

Mr. Darwazah said Dar Al Hikma has already started exporting to Libya and indicated that 80 per cent of the total contracts, worth \$4 million to Iraq, have been carried out.

Mr. Darwazah said Dar Al Hikma sold \$45 million worth of medicines this year, up from \$37 million last year. He noted that the firm spends nearly \$2 million annually on research and development.

Jordanians taking drastic measures to get around festive alcohol ban

AMMAN (AFP) — The prospect of a government alcohol ban is forcing Jordanians to take drastic measures this year to drink the New Year in.

Two five-star hotels here are even planning to celebrate the New Year four days early to get around the ban on drinking during the month of Ramadan.

The precise timing of

the fast and resulting ban is dependent on the sighting of the new moon, but this year it is expected to start on either Dec. 28 or 29, well before New Year's Eve.

The Ministry of Interior said to hamper home the point, it has sent a memorandum to every hotel and club in Jordan reminding them of the ban.

The memorandum asks those establishments waiting to offer New Year's Eve parties on the proper date, despite the alcohol ban, to do so "in complete discretion and without any media publicity."

One of the hotels that has responded to the warning by bringing forward its celebrations is the Hotel InterContinental. It is offering an "unforgettable evening" with the all-important champagne and a performance by well-known Iraqi singer Kazem Saher for the princely sum of \$115-125 a head.

For those with a more modest budget, the same evening the Hotel Regency is offering a party at \$50 a head with performances by Lebanese singer Hyam Said and U.S. belly dancer Topaz.

For those really determined to drink the New Year in, several travel agencies are offering New Year's Eve parties in Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, and Cyprus at prices ranging from \$300 to \$600.

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLS	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7805	0.6026	1.4388	130.20	1.4213	1743.80	2.0067	6.9625
DE Mark	0.5618	1.0000	0.3381	0.8061	73.13	0.7980	979.11	1.1270	3.3489
GB Sterling	1.6595	2.9550	1.0000	2.3862	215.75	2.3586	2893.84	3.3301	9.9848
CH Franc	0.6990	1.2365	0.4183	1.0000	90.47	0.9872	1211.14	139.61	4.1412
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3665	0.4822	1.1042	1.0000	13.38	154.01	4.6760	13.7600
CA Dollar	0.7038	1.2389	0.4197	1.0007	1.09	1.0000	1213.65	1.3963	4.1480
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0206	0.3452	0.0825	1340.84	0.8147	11.50	3.4178	10.3600
NL Guilder	0.4883	0.871	0.3000	0.7170	64.88	0.7081	868.77	1.0000	2.9708
FR Franc	0.1677	0.2885	0.1010	0.2418	21.81	0.2383	33.64	33.6400	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLS	FRF
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	2.5272	0.3704	0.9370	3.6400	0.3048	3.6728	1631.00	3.4020
Saudi Riyal	0.2688	0.4888	0.1605	0.4183	0.4305	0.4183	5.1878	2162.43	4.8051
Bahraini Dinar	2.46	4.3946	0.3480	0.9370	3.6400	0.3048	3.6728	1631.00	3.4020
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.4946	0.1605	0.4183	0.4305	0.4183	5.1878	2162.43	4.8051
Kuwait Dinar	3.2808	5.9222	0.4305	1.0933	11.94	12.05	5022.97	2162.43	4.8051
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.4923	0.1605	0.4183	0.4305	0.4183	5.1878	2162.43	4.8051
Lebanese L1000	0.65	1.1824	0.3480	0.9370	3.6400	0.3048	3.6728	1631.00	3.4020
Egyptian	0.2939	0.5301	0.1824	0.4610	1.0700	0.0838	1.0796	450.03	1.0000

Energy									
Oil	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit
Brent	18.11	17.94	18.11	17.94	18.11	17.94	18.11	17.94	18.11
WTI	18.68	18.48	18.68	18.48	18.68	18.48	18.68	18.48	18.68
Dubai	17.00	17.25	17.00	17.25	17.00	17.25	17.00	17.25	17.00
U.S. Gas	184.00	183.00	184.00	183.00	184.00	183.00	184.00	183.00	184.00

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLS	FRF
SA Riyal	0.2688	0.4888	0.1605	0.4183	0.4305	0.4183	5.1878	2162.43	4.8051
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.4923	0.1605	0.4183	0.4305	0.4183	5.1878	2162.43	4.8051
KW Dinar	3.2808	5.9222	0.4305	1.0933	11.94	12.05	5022.97	2162.43	4.8051
BH Dinar	0.2723	0.4923	0.1605	0.4183	0.4305	0.4183	5.1878	2162.43	4.8051
CY Pound	1.9133	3.4065	1.1622	2.7629	249.12	1.1622	2.7629	249.12	1.0000

Main Equity Indices									
Bours	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls		
New York	DOW JONES	8149.13	98.97	1.23	8166.29	8017.08	8050.15		
New York	S&P 500	983.79	10.69	1.1	988.25	963.1	973.1		
London	FT-SE 100	5142.9	60.6	1.18	5178.5	5047.9	5082.3		
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	16244.48	117.68	0.72	16597	15459.3	16308.8		
Paris	CAC 40	2910.09	4.36	0.15	2945.16	2883.38	2914.45		
Frankfurt	DAX	4170.08	30.28	0.73	4181.97	4146.96	4138.9		

Energy									
Commodity	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit
Coffee (c/lb)	175.25	175.25	Cocoa (\$/ton)	1630	1630	Sugar (\$/ton)	300.7	300.7	300.7
Wheat (\$/ton)	128.5	128.5	Soya (c/lb)	24.58	24.58	Tea (kg/box)	168	168	168
Barley (\$/ton)	370	370	Rice (\$/ton)	370	370				

* JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1743	1.1802
DE Mark	0.3969	0.3989
CH Franc	0.4907	0.4932
FR Franc	0.1186	0.1192
JP Yen	0.543	0.5457
NL Guilder	0.3523	0.3541
IT Lira	0.4052	0.4072

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET									
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 07/12/1997									
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	QIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE
346.000	249.000	ARAB BANK	15.3	1.20	2	4020	1334640	332.00	332.00
2.340	1.680	JOB. NATIONAL BK.	2	0.00	11	219997	419856	1.91	1.87
3.600	1.880	BANK OF JORDAN	6.1	0.00	15	2991	5685	1.88	3.92
1.190	0.890	MID. EAST INV. BK.	69.0	0.00	5	1044	1055	1.05	1.05
2.880	2.150	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.11	1	28100	72719	2.59	2.59
5.300	4.600	THE HOUSING BK.	35.4	3.77	3	200	1030	5.25	5.15
4.180	3.850	JOR. KUMAT BANK	30.4	0.00	5	2947	5690	1.95	1.95
4.190	3.450	ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	21.1	0.00	5	50000	146400	2.79	2.79
4.050	2.900	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	14.2	3.43	3	250	700	2.95	2.80
3.500	3.110	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	P	0.00	3	100	115	1.15	1.15
3.900	3.080	JOR. INV. F.N. BANK	24.1	0.00	3	400	3500	3.75	3.75
1.900	0.870	BILT. AL-HAL (REITNA)	9.7	17.05	1	600	528	0.88	0.88
5.150	3.370	ARAB BANKING CO.	18.1	0.00	3	2325	5813	2.50	2.50
BANK SECTOR TOTALS									
2.020	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.3	8.02	2	1300	2431	1.87	1.87
2.350	1.820	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.2	4.73	1	1000	1920	1.91	1.92
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS									
2.050	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.4	5.15	31	138384	268462	1.94	1.94
4.030	1.320	JORD. ELECTRICITY	15.0	4.56	2	270	680	2.60	2.52
1.010	0.820	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.5	6.67	6	55000	49775	0.90	0.90
1.810	0.480	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	26.2	0.00	3	2500	1275	0.51	0.51
3.900	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDIC.	9.7	0.00	5	6575	24534	3.74	3.74
1.100	0.900	ZAKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	3	5500	5115	0.94	0.94
2.230	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	8.1	6.47	1	100	170	1.71	1.70
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS									
4.450	3.010	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.7	3.57	2	250	770	3.07	3.08
7.050	5.570	ARAB POTASH CO.	15.3	3.08	8	7400	48100	6.50	6.50
11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	8.47	15	1170	12320	10.54	10.50
3.260	1.320	INDUSTRIAL COM. AGR.	9	0.00	4	771	1117	1.45	1.45
4.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	11.3	4.87	11	351	14429	4.09	4.11
2.940	2.160	JORDAN DAILY	9.4	8.73	1	100	280	2.81	2.80
6.000	4.400	DAR ALDAHA QV. INV.	13.3	4.60	5	2050	11167	5.48	5.43
3.850	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	5.5	10.64	3	1750	4113	2.36	2.35
6.990	4.50	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	8	9400	4324	4.6	4.6
1.330	0.800	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	23.6	0.00	1	250	195	0.82	0.78
1.770	1.510	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	1	200	140	0.71	0.70
3.000	1.750	NATIONAL INDUS.	9	0.00	4	1500	795	0.53	0.53
5.30	3.20	NATL. CABLE WIRE. MFG.	29.5	0.00	1	250	308	1.17	1.23
1.880	0.870	JOR. SULPHO-CHEN	9	0.00	2	2000	1200	0.60	0.60
1.410	0.730	UNIV. MODN. INDUS.	9	25	20	89950	80013	0.87	0.85
1.070	0.810	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	9	14.29	10	17150	12510	0.73	0.73
2.070	1.340	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.7	0.00	6	2500	2202	0.89	0.88
1.370	1.080	EL. SAY READY WEAR	48.6	0.00	3	500	690	1.39	1.38
1.030	0.800	IND. TOBACCO	6.7	0.00	3	15500	16910	1.22	1.22
0.840	0.570	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	6	10250	6258	0.61	0.62
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS									
4.610	3.60	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9.6	0.00	2	2000	720	0.36	0.36
0.800	0.660	UNION INV. 504	9	0.00	5	34000	7500	0.73	0.72
0.570	0.360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	8	3900	1595	0.41	0.41
0.780	0.610	AL-DAMLIYAH 752	66.2	0.00	2	5000	2200	0.68	0.69



World Boxing Council Welterweight Champion Oscar De La Hoya (L) lands a punch on Wilfredo Rivera of Puerto Rico, during the third round of their championship fight at Convention Hall in Atlantic City. De La Hoya retained the championship after a technical knock-out due to a severe cut over Rivera's right eye in round eight (Reuters photo)

'Golden Boy' De La Hoya stays unbeaten

ATLANTIC CITY (AFP) — World Boxing Council welterweight champion Oscar De La Hoya remained unbeaten here Saturday with an eighth-round stoppage of Puerto Rico's Wilfredo Rivera.

The victory, de la Hoya's 22nd early stoppage, lifted the United States fighter to 27-0. Rivera fell to 27-3 with one drawn.

Referee Joe Cortez stopped the fight with 12 seconds remaining in the eighth round after doctor Howard Taylor examined Rivera and said the challenger was unable to continue fighting.

"I'm happy they didn't stop the fight in the first few rounds," De La Hoya said. "I wanted the experience. I wanted to stay in there with a good opponent."

A gash was opened over Rivera's right eye by de la Hoya in the second round and was examined by a doctor between rounds thereafter as blood trickled down his battered face.

"Once I saw blood, I got excited for the first few seconds," De La Hoya said. "Then I said, 'Calm down. The knockout will come. Just win your fight. Don't worry about the cut.'"

"I started to remember Sugar Ray Robinson, how calm and cool he was. All the fighters of the past, how they didn't get excited, just

stay calm and cool and professional in the ring."

An Olympic gold medalist in 1992, De La Hoya made the third defense of the crown he took from Pernell Whitaker in April, having previously dispatched David Kanau and Hector Camacho.

A protest by Rivera's camp forced de la Hoya to re-wrap his hands before the fight, but the champion used those hands to pound Rivera.

A hard right hook by "Golden Boy" de la Hoya sent Rivera to the canvas late in the fourth round after the American set it up with a powerful left hook.

"He's a strong man with a big heart," De La Hoya said. "I give him a lot of credit. He took a lot of punches."

Rivera said de la Hoya needed six rounds to finish him after opening the cut because he had to stay cautious.

"He respected me," Rivera said. "I'm a very creative boxer. I know how to deal with him. I tried as hard as I could. Puerto Rico, I'm sorry. I tried to bring you a present this Christmas."

Although relatively new to the welterweight division, the quick and trim de la Hoya showed he has the ability to inflict damage as much as he did at lighter

weights.

"He's a very fast fighter, not very strong, but when you are as intelligent as he is, you don't need to be very strong to win a fight like this," Rivera said. "Oscar De La Hoya is a tremendous champion."

But with Terry Norris being upset on the undercard, De La Hoya is also a man without a major opponent looming.

Even though he has a mandatory title defense set in February at Las Vegas against France's Patrick Charpentier, Norris was seen the big-money fight for later in 1998.

Now De La Hoya, 24, must consider new foes, including moving up again in weight to face Puerto Rico's Felix Trinidad.

"I have to think about who I want to fight next and plan out my career so I can fight for a very long time," de la Hoya said.

Another thing De La Hoya is considering is fighting fewer times each year in hopes of extending his career.

"I had a good workout this year. I'm not tired of boxing whatsoever," De La Hoya said. "To stay a champion for a long time, you can't be boxing so often, maybe two or three, tops four times a year."

Knicks, Rockets win

NEW YORK (AP) — John Starks scored 27 points and Charlie Ward sparked a third-quarter surge that gave the New York Knicks their sixth straight home victory, 90-79 over the Charlotte Hornets on Saturday.

Starks had 16 of his points in the second quarter and ward scored all 10 of his in the third, including a pair of 3-pointers and a layup that allowed the Knicks to break open a close game.

The victory snapped a two-game losing streak for New York that included a dreadful performance in a 105-91 loss Thursday night at Dallas.

The Knicks righted themselves by overcoming 24 turnovers and holding the Hornets to 35 per cent shooting that included a 3-for-13 performance by Glen Rice and a 4-for-15 outing by David Wesley.

Anthony Mason led Charlotte with 16 points and 14 rebounds. The Hornets have lost four of their last five after starting the season 9-3.

• **Wizards 114, Timberwolves 103:** At Washington, Chris Webber had 33 points and 12 rebounds as the Washington Wizards remained perfect in their new home. Juan Howard added 26 points for the wizards, who are 3-0 at the MCI Centre after opening the season 0-5 in their old building, the USAir Arena.

Stephen Marbury had 27 points and seven assists for Minnesota.

Tom Gugliotta, who missed part of the third quarter after getting an accidental elbow under his left eye from Webber, finished with 24 points and 11 rebounds for the Timberwolves.

• **Rockets 108, Mavericks 106:** At Mexico City, the NBA's first regular-season game in Mexico was a success for the league — and the Houston Rockets.

Charles Barkley had 19 points and 17 rebounds as the Rockets beat the Dallas Mavericks before a sellout crowd of 20,635 at the Sports Palace.

The game was sold out two days in advance and scalpers were selling \$11 tickets for \$37.50 — 11 days' work at minimum wage.

Michael Finley scored a career-high 35 points for Dallas, which was playing its second game under coach Don Nelson, who took over Wednesday after Jim Clemons was fired.

• **Magic 83, Clippers 79:** At Los Angeles, Horace Grant, back off the injured list, scored 25 points and Gerald Wilkins added 21 as the Orlando Magic beat the Los Angeles Clippers.

The Magic used an 11-0 run in the fourth quarter to defeat the Clippers.

Eric Piatkowski, coming off a career-high 24 points in Thursday's overtime victory over San Antonio, led the Clippers with 15 points in his third start of the season.

Tunisian club lifts African Cup-Winners Cup

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Tunisian club Etoile du Sahel lifted the African Cup-Winners Cup on Saturday night despite losing 1-0 to Royal Armed Forces in Morocco.

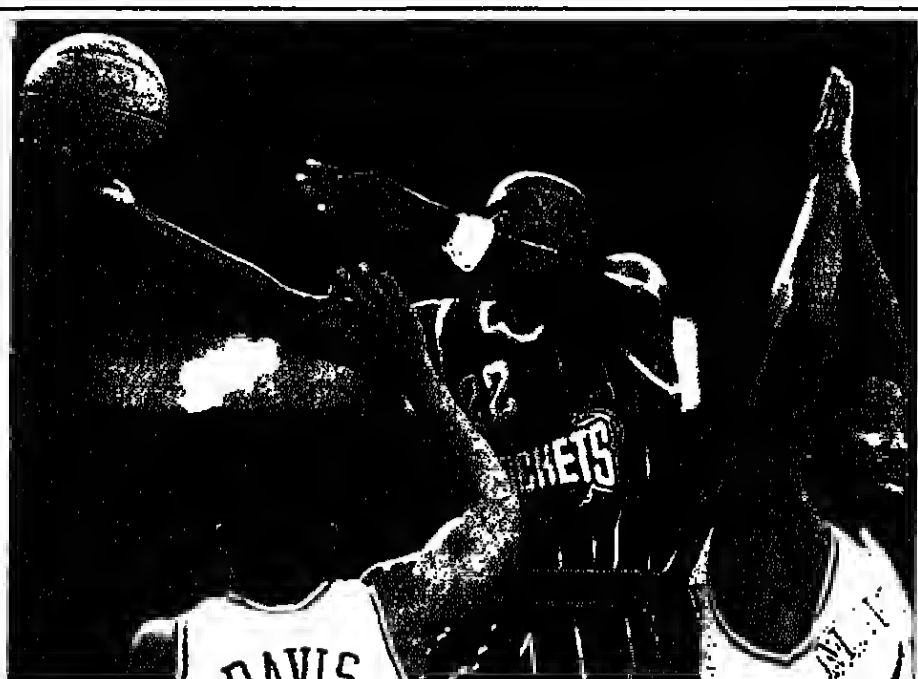
Etoile won the first leg of the final 2-0 last month and triumphed 2-1 on aggregate to become the second holders of the Nelson Mandela Cup from the North African state.

Success for Sahel completed a Tunisian treble with Club Africain winning the Arab Champions Cup and Esperance lifting the African Football Confederation (CAF) Cup last month.

Etoile lifted the CAF Cup in 1995 and next year will compete in the African Champions League hoping to become the first team to win the three continental competitions.

Morocco are still in contention for the leading club prize this year with Raja trailing 1-0 entering the second leg of the Champions League final against Obuasi Goldfields of Ghana in Casablanca on December 13.

Zamalek of Egypt became the first club to win the Afro-Asian title twice by defeating Pohang Steelers of South Korea 1-0 in the second leg of the final in Cairo.



Houston Rockets' Clyde Drexler (22) glides in for a lay up as Dallas Mavericks' Hubert Davis (L) and A.C. Green stand by during their game in Mexico City, December 6. This is the first regular season NBA game ever to be played outside the U.S. and Canada (Reuters photo)

SCOREBOARD

• **Masters of Champions results**
Women's semi-finals:
Martina Hingis bt Lindsay Davenport 6-4, 6-3
Anke Huber bt Iva Majoli 6-3, 6-4.

• **NBA results**

New York	90	Charlotte	79
Washington	114	Minnesota	103
Houston	108	Dallas	106
Orlando	83	LA Clippers	79

• **Spanish results**

Atletico Madrid	2	Sporting Gijon	1
Real Zaragoza	1	Barcelona	2
Oviedo	1	Real Madrid	1
Espanyol	1	Mallorca	0

• **Dutch results**

Fortuna Sittard	1	Twente Enschede	0
Ajax	1	Roda JC Kerkrade	0
NAC Breda	1	Spuria Rotterdam	2
Heerenveen	0	Doetinchem	0

• **Belgium results**

Standard Liege	0	Lierse	0
Charleroi	2	Antwerp	1
Lokeren	1	Beveren	2
Anderlecht	1	Westerlo	0
Lommel	1	Saint-Truiden	1
Gent	1	Genk	2
Ekeren	0	Harelbeke	2

• **Scottish Premier Division results**

Aberdeen	1	St Johnstone	1
Dundee Utd	0	Dunfermline	0
Hearts	2	Motherwell	0
Kilmarnock	0	Celtic	0

• **Scottish Cup results**

Scottish Cup 1st rnd			
Cowdenbeath	0	Montrose	0
East Fife	2	Stranraer	3
Inverness Cal.	3	Whitehill	1

• **English FA Cup results (2nd rnd)**

Cumbridge	1	Stevenage	1
Cardiff	3	Hendon	1
Cheltenham	1	Boreham Wood	1
Colchester	1	Hereford	1
Fulham	1	Southend	0
Grimsby	2	Chesterfield	2
Hednesford	0	Darlington	1
Lincoln City	2	Emley	2
Macclesfield	0	Walsall	7
Northampton	1	Basingstoke	1
Oldham	2	Blackpool	1
Peterborough	3	Dag Red	2
Preston	2	Notts County	2
Rotherham	6	Kings Lynn	0
Scunthorpe	1	Ilkeston Tn	1
Torquay	1	Watford	1
Wigan	2	York	1
Wisbech	0	Bristol Rovers	2

• **English Football League results**

Division One			
Bury	0	Middlesbrough	1
Crewe	2	Huddersfield	5
Man City	0	Wolverhampton	1
Norwich	2	Sheff Utd	1
Nottm Forest	2	Bradford	2
Port Vale	0	Birmingham	1
Portsmouth	2	Stoke	0
QPR	0	Sunderland	1
Reading	2	Charlton	0
Swindon	4	Oxford Utd	1
Tranmere	1	Ipswich	1
West Brom	3	Stockport	2

• **English Division Three**

Scarborough	1	Rochdale	0
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• **English Premiership results**

Aston Villa	3	Coventry	0
Blackburn	3	Bolton	1
Derby	2	West Ham	0
Leeds	0	Everton	0
Leicester	1	Crystal Palace	1
Liverpool	1	Man. Utd.	3
Newcastle	0	Arsenal	1
Tottenham	1	Chelsea	6

• **German League results**

Werder Bremen	2	Karlsruhe	4
1860 Munich	1	Stuttgart	3
Arminia B.	0	VfL Bochum	2
B. Leverkusen	0	Schalke 04	0
Duisburg	2	B. Moencheng.	1
Kaiserslautern	2	Bayern Munich	0

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TARIK HIRSHI

RATHER SAFE THAN SORRY

Neither vulnerable. South deals

NORTH
♠ 102
♥ AK43
♦ K108
♣ AQ2

EAST
♠ Ad
♥ QJ1072
♦ Q976542
♣ 54

WEST
♠ Q9763
♥ C
♦ J3
♣ 108763

SOUTH
♠ AK854
♥ 765
♦ AQ
♣ J3

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
INT Pass GNT Pass
Pass Pass

Opening lead: Six of ♠

A South, how would you tackle a contract of six no trump for six spades, for that matter, at duplicate pairs? Would you play the same way at rubber bridge?

Where we watched, the bidding was short and sweet. Despite the five-card major suit, South selected one, no trump on the opening bid, the best described the shape and strength of the hand. With 17 high-card points facing an announced minimum of 16, North proceeded

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Juventus take aim at Manchester United

TURIN, Italy (AFP) — Juventus coach Marcello Lippi has warned Manchester United that his side will do everything to win here on Wednesday night when they meet in the Champions League.

Juventus turned on the style in their 2-1 victory over Lazio on Saturday, with Alessandro Del Piero scoring twice and Filippo Inzaghi hitting the post twice as they narrowed the gap on Serie A leaders Inter Milan.

Lippi said: "Coming just before such an important match, a victory like this is obviously going to boost our self-confidence."

"We are going to do everything possible to try to win on Wednesday, and we'll be attacking right from the start," he promised. "After that, we'll just have to wait for news of other results from further afield."

Juventus may have been hit by injury and suspension for the clash with United, but Lippi dismissed

any excuses and promised fireworks when the English side take the pitch at the Delle Alpi stadium here.

"I never talk about players who won't be available for a match," he said. "I've got every faith in the men who are going to play, and I'm convinced that they will not fall short of the crowd's expectations."

"This Juventus team never let people down."

After winning every Champions League game so far this season, Manchester United are already certain of finishing top of Group B.

But Juventus can still join them in the quarter-finals by taking all three points and finishing as one of the two best runners-up from the six groups — provided the other results go the Italians' way.

Juventus cannot field Saturday's match-winner Del Piero against United as the striker is suspended, and will be replaced by Daniel Fonseca.

Lippi was probed as to why the Uruguayan was only sent on for the last 10 minutes against Lazio, giving him precious little preparation for the battle with Alex Ferguson's defence.

"The substitutions had only one objective — and that was to win the game," said the Juventus coach.

"When the outcome of a match is still in doubt, you can't think about a euphoric on Wednesday night — you have to concentrate on winning the game. And anyway, whether someone plays 10 or 30 minutes doesn't really matter."

Inzaghi and Fonseca are Lippi's only available strikers against United, and Lippi will also be without defender Gianluca Pessotto and French midfielder Didier Deschamps through injury.

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 64144	CINEMA TEL: 64144	CINEMA TEL: 64144	CINEMA TEL: 64144	CINEMA TEL: 64144	CINEMA TEL: 64144	CINEMA TEL: 64144
	PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	Risham Yanes Theatre
	HERCULES AND THE AMAZON WOMEN	Jim Carrey... in LIAR — LIAR	Nour Al Sharif & Layla Alwi... in AL MASEER (Arabic)	Rowan Atkinson... in MR. BEAN	ABDOUN Harrison Ford... in AIR FORCE ONE	ABDOUN Mel Gibson & Julia Roberts... in CONSPIRACY THEORY	THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas



Canada's Melanie Turgenn turns on a gate while on her way to a 11th place finish in the women's Super-G race December 6 in Lake Louise. Germany's Katja Seizinger won the race with a time of 1:14.71. Hilde Gerg was second, 1:15.04, and Italy's Isolde Kostner was third, 1:15.09 (Reuters photo)

England, Scotland seeded for 2000 Euro championships

GENEVA (AFP) — England and Scotland will both be seeded for the 2000 European championships jointly hosted for the first time ever by Belgium and Holland, but not World Cup hosts France, UEFA revealed here on Saturday.

The executive committee of European football's ruling body explained it had come up with a formula for the qualifiers with the hosts automatically taking their place for the 16-team finals.

All nine group winners will go through as well as the best runner-up.

The remaining eight runners-up will then play off at home and away with the winners of those games taking the remaining four slots.

UEFA came up with its seeding formula based on team's average results over the qualifiers for Euro '96 as well as the 1998 World Cup.

That lets in England, even though as hosts they did not

play any qualifiers for the first of those two tournaments. But they claim their spot after winning their World Cup qualifying group ahead of Italy, who nonetheless are still seeded.

The formula means the Scots also just edge in ahead of France.

The other seeds are: Germany, Spain, Romania, Russia, Yugoslavia and Norway.

The French are relegated to the second string of countries along with Bulgaria, Denmark, Croatia, Portugal, Austria, the Czech Republic, Turkey and Greece.

The executive committee also decided that the much-maligned Interoto Cup would continue to exist for another two seasons, albeit in modified form with direct elimination replacing the group system and larger teams entering after the first round. Each country will have a maximum of two teams.

Spain and Italy, who have shunned the tournament to date, may well now decide to enter teams, but UEFA secretary general Gerhard Aigner said that "problems exist for England and Portugal," without elaborating.

UEFA's fair-play system will also be modified with teams topping the fair play league receiving an extra place in the UEFA Cup the following season.

Two further places will also be on offer for countries whose teams reach a certain fair play standard to be determined by UEFA, with lots being drawn if necessary.

However, UEFA has still not decided whether to give back a UEFA Cup place to England's League Cup winners, withdrawn last year.

UEFA wants to see the reduction of the Premiership from 20 to 18 teams before they will return the extra place.

Barca back on top as Real held

MADRID (AFP) — Barcelona went back to the top of the Spanish league on Saturday after first half goals from Sergi and Rivaldo brought a 2-1 win at Real Zaragoza, while previous leaders Real Madrid were held 1-1 at Oviedo.

Barca's win gives them a two-point lead over their rivals with the Catalan club having garnered 34 points from 15 games.

Strike sensation Raul was on target for Real two minutes after the break but an equaliser from Uruguayan forward Juancho Gonzalez in the 88th minute meant the champions had to settle for a point — and second spot for now.

Atletico Madrid made it a better night for the capital with a 2-1 win over Sporting Gijon cementing their third place, five points off the pace.

Real were undone by a late loss of concentration with Oviedo's Argentinian playmaker Tito Pompei finding Gonzalez lurking in the area, from where he made no mistake.

It was scant consolation for Real fans to recall that Barcelona went down 2-1 at Oviedo recently.

Barcelona's Brazilian matchwinner Rivaldo meanwhile saw his evening end on a sad note as his fifth booking brings with it a one-match ban. He now leaves town anyway for the Confederation Cup with Brazil in Saudi Arabia next week.

Barcelona's city neighbours Espanyol moved up to fourth after a 1-0 home win over fading Mallorca in the late game, which leaves Espanyol unbeaten at the Olympic stadium where they moved in the summer from their dilapidated Sarria ground.

2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup Jordan's Al Arabi lose 32-30 as Egypt's Al Ahli take Group A lead

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's Al Arabi was defeated by Kuwait's Al Qadissieh 32-30 (17-14) and dropped to last place in Group B with only one point on the 5th day of the 2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup currently under way in Amman with ten teams taking part.

Al Arabi's loss upset Jordanian fans whose morale was boosted after Jordan's Al Salt scored the first Jordanian victory in the tournament by beating Qatar's Qatar Club 26-18 Saturday.

Al Arabi have only one point from a 35-35 tie with Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli who currently top Group B.

They will next meet third placed Egypt's Al Olympi Monday in what is considered to be their last chance to score a win.

Al Qadissieh's win moved them up to fourth and renewed hopes of advancing their standing when they play Qatar's Al Rayyan Monday.

Also Sunday, Egypt's Al Ahli took a clear lead atop Group A when they beat UAE's Al Ahli 35-26.

Jordan's Al Arabi 30 Kuwait's Al Qadissieh 32: Inspired by Al Salt's win over Qatar Club, Al Arabi started the match full of confidence with their eyes set on advancing to third place.

Al Arabi faced tough resistance from their opponents who played a fast pace match with accurate passing to end the first half 17-14.

Al Qadissieh did not give Al Arabi a chance who lost

Group A							
	P	W	T	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
Egypt's Al Ahli	4	4	-	-	140	91	8
UAE's Al Ahli	3	2	-	1	91	80	4
Jordan's Al Salt	2	1	-	1	44	48	2
Qatar's Qatar	1	-	-	3	59	87	-
Leb.'s Al Sadaqah	2	-	-	2	51	79	-

Group B							
	P	W	T	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
S. Arabia's Al Ahli	3	1	2	-	90	87	4
Qatar's Al Rayyan	2	1	1	-	63	52	3
Egypt's Al Olympi	2	1	-	1	62	51	2
Kuwait's Qadissieh	2	1	-	1	54	66	2
Jordan's Al Arabi	3	-	1	2	91	104	1

Monday's schedule of matches

Egypt's Al Olympi vs. Jordan's Al Arabi	3 p.m.
Qatar's Al Rayyan vs. Kuwait's Al Qadissieh	5 p.m.
Qatar's Qatar vs. Lebanon's Al Sadaqah	7 p.m.

control as their shots lacked accuracy.

Al Arabi, depending on Mohammad Abulail and Mowafaq Fathallah, moved point by point but Al Qadissieh were able to end the match and upset Al Arabi 32-30.

Egypt's Al Ahli 35 UAE's Al Ahli 26: In Sunday's other match, leaders Egypt's Al Ahli crushed second placed UAE's Al Ahli in a fierce clash for the Group A lead.

The win gave Egypt's Al Ahli the group lead with 8 points followed by UAE's Al Ahli with four points.

Egypt's Al Ahli gave one of their best performances showing that they deserve to be ranked sixth in the world.

UAE's Al Ahli tried to stop Jawhar Jawhar and Saber Hussein from pene-

trating their defence but without any success as Egypt's Al Ahli ended the first half 19-16.

In the second half, the Egyptian team increased the pressure and played beautifully dragging help-

less UAE's Al Ahli towards a painful loss. Egypt's Al Ahli ended the match with 35-26 win.

Jordan's Al Salt played Lebanon's Al Sadaqah in Sunday's late Group A match.

In Saturday's late match, Egypt's Al Ahli had easily overcome Lebanon's Al Sadaqah 44-28 (26-9).

In a post-match interview with the Jordan Times, Jordan Handball Federation (JHF) Chairman Sari Hamdan said he was satisfied with the Jordanian teams' performance so far.

"Al Salt and Al Arabi are facing the best Arab teams

in the region. Regardless of the results, this is a good chance to gain more experience," he added.

Held under the patronage of HRH Princess Sumayya, the 2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup kicked off Dec. 3 and concludes Dec. 13.

The ten competing teams are playing in two groups: Group A: Egypt's Al Ahli, Qatar's Qatar, United Arab Emirates' Al Ahli, Jordan's Al Salt and Lebanon's Al Sadaqah.

Group B: Jordan's Al Arabi, Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli, Egypt's Al Olympi, Qatar's Al Rayyan and Kuwait's Al Qadissieh.

The JHF has allocated cash rewards for Jordan's two teams in the tourney — Al Salt and Al Arabi: JD 2,000 if they finish third, JD1,000 for fourth place and JD500 for fifth place.

Ronaldo scores but Juventus close on Inter Milan

MILAN (AFP) — Juventus slashed Inter Milan's lead in the Serie A from four to two points on Saturday, as the champions beat Lazio 2-1 and 10-man Inter drew 1-1 with Sampdoria.

Ronaldo gave Inter the lead and nearly scored a magnificent second, but Gigi Simoni's side finished the day with 27 points from 11 matches, just two clear of Marcello Lippi's Juventus on 25.

Ronaldo opened the scoring after nine minutes, driving the ball home after a neat one-two with Argentine Diego Simeone.

After the two he scored for fun in Thursday's exhibition match in Marseille before the World Cup draw, it was the ninth in 11 league games this season for the 21-year-old Brazilian.

But it was all square on the half-hour after former Lazio skipper Giuseppe Signori celebrated his debut for Sampdoria by earning a penalty from new Inter defender Francesco Colonnese.

Vincenzo Montella made

no mistake with the spot-kick and 10 minutes later Simeone was given his marching orders for a second bookable offence.

Inter were on the ropes and within a minute midfielder Francesco Moriero had to clear off their line as Sampdoria went looking for the knock-out blow before the break.

Jürgen Klinsmann replaced Signori soon after the break, and midway through the second-half the German striker missed an absolute snapper, heading wide after Montella sent over a fine cross.

Ronaldo won a standing ovation from the Genoa crowd towards the end for a magnificent run, beating three men on his way from the left to the middle before 'keeper Fabrizio Ferron denied him a stunning winner.

In Turin, two goals from Alessandro Del Piero were enough for Juventus against a Lazio side who had a man sent off.

Juventus took the lead in the 14th minute after Lazio

goalkeeper Luca Marchegiani parried a golden opportunity for Filippo Inzaghi — only for Del Piero to swoop on the rebound.

The match was all level in the 25th minute, when Juventus defender Moreno Torricelli felled Czech midfielder Pavel Nedved in the penalty area and Lazio's Dario Marcolin converted the spot-kick.

But Juventus were back in front less than 10 minutes later, after Marchegiani was judged to have tripped Del Piero as the Juventus striker tried to round the Lazio keeper.

Del Piero took his revenge from the penalty spot, bringing up his seventh goal of the season, and minutes later Inzaghi hit the post for the second time as Juventus turned the screw.

Lazio were down to 10 men in the 62nd minute, when Argentine substitute Jos Chamot, as the last defender, was shown the red card for stopping goal-bound Inzaghi by pulling his shirt.

But his side were deter-

mined to go down fighting, and Del Piero was denied his hat-trick first by Nedved, who cleared right on the line, and then by keeper Marchegiani.

Both matches started on time after the negotiating skills of football federation president Luciano Nizzola avoided a historic first act of industrial action by Italy's referees.

Match officials had been planning to start the weekend's matches 15 minutes late in protest at a recent wave of criticism.

But Nizzola won over their representatives at a meeting on Friday, promising tougher action against any slurs from players or club officials, and a PR campaign to improve referees' public image.

Hagi to quit Romanian side after World Cup

BUCHAREST (AFP) — Romanian skipper and playmaker Gheorghe Hagi will quit the national side after next summer's World Cup in France, his agent Ioan Becali said here on Saturday.

The 32-year-old Hagi, nicknamed the "Maradona of the Carpathians", is set to announce his "impending retirement" from the national side following the World Cup in France," Becali said.

"He will continue playing for another year with his club Galatasaray (of Turkey) before ending his career," Becali added.

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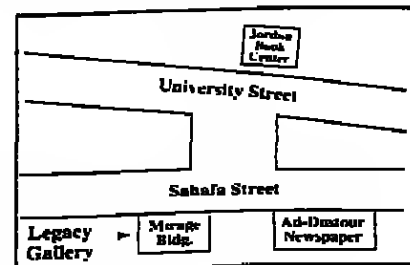
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Iraq battles for Muslims' support at Tehran summit

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iraq is fighting a rearguard action to stave off a new round of condemnation from Muslim states over its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, and to garner support for its fight to have U.N. sanctions lifted.

Baghdad's call for solidarity from Muslim states gathered here for next week's Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit has so far fallen on deaf ears, with Kuwait opposing any softening of the OIC line.

The agenda of the Dec. 9-11 summit makes no reference to the suffering of the Iraqi people, referring only to the "consequences of the Iraqi aggression against the state of Kuwait and the necessity for Iraq to implement all the relevant Security Council resolutions."

A resolution on Iraq hammered out by diplomats from all 55 OIC countries reflecting the agenda has been rejected by Baghdad, which wants the issue discussed under the heading: "The situation between Iraq and Kuwait."

The Iraqi diplomat on the OIC committee which drew up the resolution fired an angry broadside at the Islamic body, saying it had consistently neglected the suffering of the Iraqi people since the 1991 Gulf War.

"They [OIC] simply ignored the fact that Iraq, during the last seven years has been complying with the rulings of the United Nations Security Council," Sa'adoun Zubaidi told the Iran News daily.

"They forget the impact of sanctions on Iraq and what is going on to the children of Iraq... What kind of Islamic world is it that allows this to happen?" he asked.

OIC foreign ministers are due to discuss the issue Sunday, although Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Sa'id Sabah played down talk of a dispute.

"There is no problem from our side, this is a question for Kuwait," he told AFP.

An Arab diplomat involved in the discussions told AFP that the wording of the resolution on Iraq was highly sensitive because of the presence of Kuwait.

"There are certainly some Arab states who would like to see a reference to the suffering of the Iraqi people in the resolution," the official, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP.

"However, there are those who cannot easily forget Iraq invaded a brother country," he added.

At the previous two OIC summits in Islamabad and Casablanca, the final declaration has condemned Iraq over the invasion of Kuwait and reiterated that it must comply with all U.N. resolutions.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who headed the committee drafting the resolutions, stressed the official OIC line, although he accepted that "attention should be paid to the suffering of the Iraqi people."

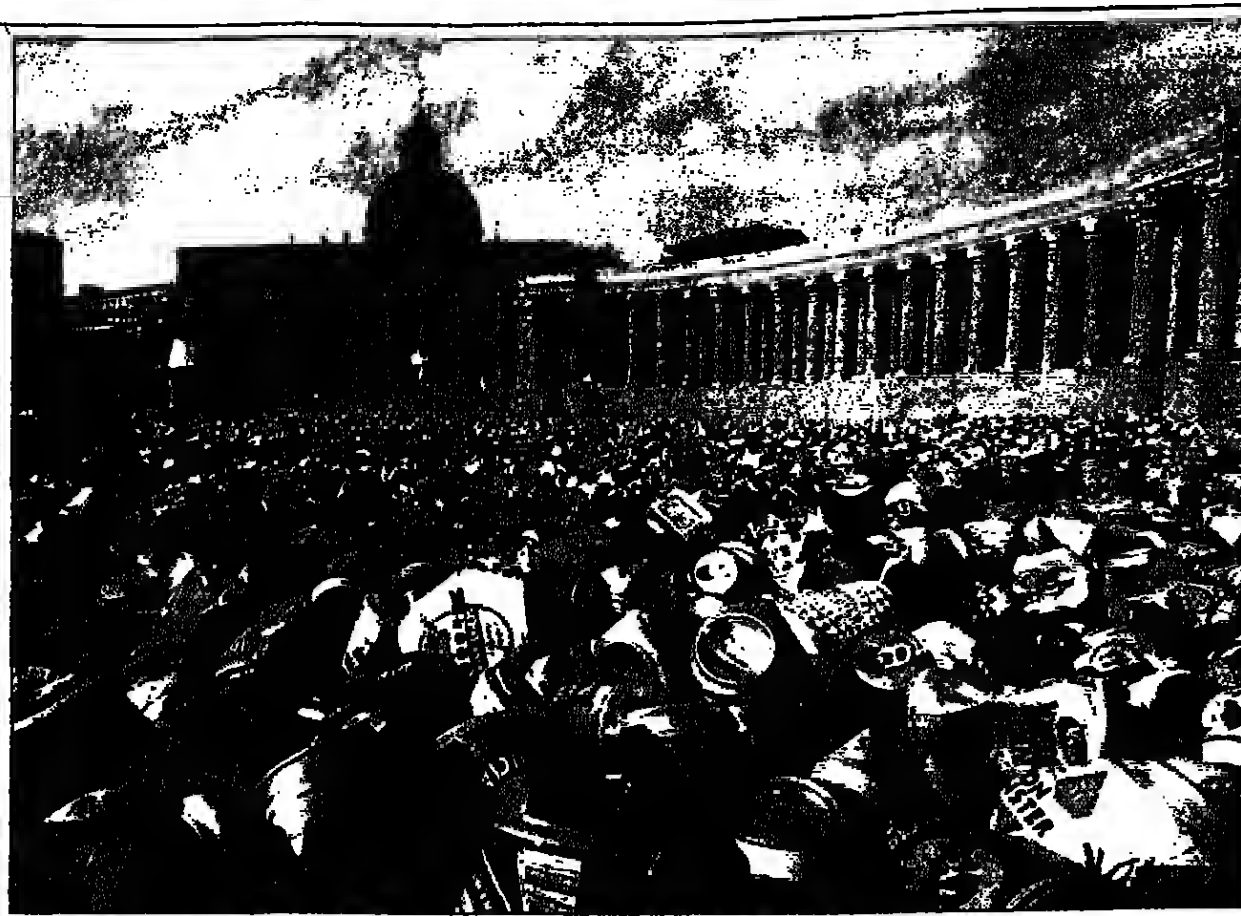
Iraq raised the stakes in its simmering relations with the United Nations by provoking a stand-off with U.N. weapons inspectors last month to draw attention to the suffering caused by the embargo.

Baghdad took a new direction on Friday by stopping the flow of oil through a pipeline to Turkey under the oil-for-food accord to protest at the inadequacy of the distribution of humanitarian aid to its people under the deal.

There have been widespread appeals in the Arab World for concrete measures to help ordinary Iraqis, although Kuwait has continued to ratchet up the rhetoric against its former occupier.

"All states in the region are still vulnerable to the adventures of this regime, which constitutes a source of instability," Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Sabah told the UAE daily Al Bayan on Friday.

Several days earlier Sheikh Sabah told London-based Al Sharq Al Awsat newspaper: "How can people forget those who killed their children?"



ST. PETER'S BASILICA MADE OUT OF CANS: Empty cans cover the 'square' of a replica of St. Peter's Basilica constructed from around 10 million used aluminium cans after its completion Sunday. Volunteers from blood and organ donation groups who built the replica hope to make it into the Guinness Book of Records. The structure will be torn down in January and the aluminium auctioned off with the proceeds going to raise money for ad campaigns on blood and organ donations (Reuters photo)

Arms deals, military relations part of Israeli-Turkish agenda

TEL AVIV (R) — An Israeli defence minister visits Turkey for the first time on Monday, raising military ties between the two countries — a notch — along with the suspicions of their Middle East neighbours.

Yitzhak Mordechai will discuss an arms trade that could top \$1 billion, joint manoeuvres and other defence projects during three days of meetings in Ankara and Istanbul.

The visit builds on a military pact, biannual strategy meetings and what analysts say is the sharing of intelligence on the foes they have in common — Syria, Iraq and Iran. Turkey's defence minister visited Israel last year.

"This is the first time an Israeli defence minister visits Turkey and it marks a peak in military relations between the two countries which have intensified in the last two years," said Mr. Mordechai's media adviser, Avi Benayahu.

Israel's 1993 peace deal with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) paved the way for closer ties with countries

sympathetic to the Palestinians, including overwhelmingly Muslim Turkey.

A military accord between the two countries in 1996 allowed Israeli air force planes to train in Turkey's airspace and opened the door to lucrative arms deals, starting with Israeli upgrading of Turkey's two squadrons of F-4 fighter planes.

"The main motive [for the military alliance] is the common threat to both countries emanating from Syria, Iraq and Iran," said political scientist Benny Miller of Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

He said Israeli planes might be using training missions over Turkey to gather vital intelligence on Israel's enemies. Israel has fought wars with Syria and views Iraq and Iran as belligerents.

For its part, Ankara is locked in a range of disputes — over water, territory and alleged support for anti-Turkish separatist rebels — with the three neighbouring states.

Other analysts have suggested Israel could use

Turkey's airspace to launch strikes on Iran's missile and nuclear programmes which Israel has said pose a long-term "existential threat."

The neighbours are worried.

Egypt, Syria and Iran called on Turkey earlier this year to reconsider the alliance and cancel a joint naval exercise among Israeli, Turkish and American troops in the Mediterranean Basin.

Israel said last week the exercise would go ahead in January after being postponed at least twice.

Israeli officials view the alliance as a victory by Turkey's army over civilian leaders critical of the military pact, including former Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan.

"This acceleration [in security ties] is mainly a result of the Turkish army's determination to continue this process despite the many hardships created by Erbakan's former government," Mr. Benayahu said.

The new government established in July 1997 fully supports the ties with Israel," he said.

In addition to the \$630 million F-4 contract, Israel is bidding to upgrade two F-5 squadrons and Turkey's M-60 tanks, said Zvi Elpeleg, Israel's ambassador to Ankara until last month.

"Turkey can get from Israel whatever it needs for contending with the terrorist problem on its borders with Iran, Iraq and Syria," said Mr. Elpeleg, referring to Turkey's war against Kurdish separatist rebels.

"The total potential of these contracts may reach a billion dollars," he told Reuters. Western arms sales, by contrast, have been hampered by disputes with Ankara over human rights abuses.

Turkish newspapers have also reported negotiations to jointly manufacture Israeli Merkava Mark III tanks and an advanced version of the Israeli Popeye air-to-ground missile.

"Meetings at the defence minister's level are aimed at creating a good atmosphere, creating chemistry. The contracts are hammered out in lower-level talks," Mr. Benayahu said.

Israel launches extradition process against U.S. suspect

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli authorities initiated extradition proceedings Sunday against a Jewish American teenager wanted in the United States for murder, officials said.

Justice Minister Tsahi Hanegbi forwarded a formal request to the Jerusalem district court to examine and respond favourably to the U.S. demand for extradition of Samuel Sheinbein, 17, a ministry spokesman said. No date was set for the court's first hearing on the matter.

Mr. Hanegbi's petition backed a ruling by the attorney general last month rejecting a claim by Sheinbein to Israeli nationality on the grounds that his father was a citizen. Israeli nationals may not be extradited.

The justice minister also requested that Sheinbein

remain in custody until the end of the extradition hearings.

Sheinbein was arrested by Israeli police in September after fleeing the United States where he was accused of murdering and dismembering a young Hispanic man in a Washington suburb.

The United States sent a formal extradition request for Sheinbein late last month shortly after Attorney General Eliakim Rubinstein ruled that the youth could not claim Israeli citizenship.

The attorney general said Sheinbein's claim was unfounded since his father left Israel as a child before the adoption of a 1952 citizenship law and subsequently tried to obtain both U.S. and Canadian nationality.

Under the 1952 law, anyone born of Israeli parents auto-

matically becomes an Israeli citizen.

Sheinbein's attorney, former Justice Minister David Libai, has said he would appeal any extradition order to the high court. Mr. Libai charged that Mr. Rubinstein's ruling on Sheinbein's citizenship was politically motivated.

Israel's initial reluctance to extradite Sheinbein sparked street protests in the U.S., notably among the Hispanic community, and raised concerns that a refusal to hand the suspect over could fuel anti-Semitic feeling.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright intervened with the Israeli government to press for Sheinbein's extradition and the U.S. Congress threatened to withhold financial aid to pressure the Israeli government on the issue.

Israeli woman friend of Rabin assassin accuses police of abuse

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A friend of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassin accused police Sunday of forcing her to confess that she knew of the planned murder but did nothing to prevent it.

Margalit Har-Shefi, 22, told a Tel Aviv court that police prevented her from sleeping and interrogated her for 24 hours straight so she was disoriented and confused when she admitted knowing of Yigal Amir's plans to kill Rabin.

"They asked me questions about the recent events and I couldn't remember," Ms. Har-Shefi told reporters after the hearing. "Today I remember things that I couldn't remember during the investigation."

Ms. Har-Shefi is accused of failing to prevent Rabin's Nov. 4, 1995 assassination by Amir, a right-wing radical seeking to end the government's policy of granting Palestinians self-rule.

Ms. Har-Shefi's lawyer pre-

sented the court with a video showing an argument between his client and Yigal Amir, a right-wing agent of the Israeli Shin Bet secret service who also allegedly knew of Amir's plans.

The video, secretly taken by Shin Bet after Rabin's slaying, shows Ms. Har-Shefi expressing astonishment at Amir's actions and shows she never believed her friend would attack Rabin, the lawyer told the court.

Sudan lashes out at Albright's Africa tour

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan on Sunday criticised an upcoming visit to Africa by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright saying she would play up U.S. spite against Khartoum.

"During this tour of countries neighbouring Sudan she will maintain her spite

against Sudan," said the minister of state in the foreign ministry, Mustafa Osman Ismail.

The United States' "open hostility against Sudan has in no way diminished," he added.

Ms. Albright on Nov. 4 announced new measures

against Sudan, criticising its alleged sponsorship of terrorism, poor human rights record and harsh treatment of southern Christians.

Sudan's refusal to extradite suspects in the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1995 also led Washington to toughen sanctions against the north-east African nation.

The new sanctions — the freezing of Sudanese assets in the U.S., the prohibition of U.S. trade with Sudan and the barring of financial transactions — add to existing measures that restricted U.S. exports and visas to Sudanese officials.

Sudan's Deputy Parliament Speaker Abdul Aziz Shihbo said her visit was "part of a U.S.-Israeli ploy to destabilise Sudan."

Saudi Arabia denies link to assassination bid against Yemeni FM

RIYADH (AFP) — Interior Minister Prince Nayef Ben Abdel Aziz has denied any Saudi link to an alleged bid to assassinate Yemen's foreign minister and said the two countries are close to sealing a border accord.

A Syrian suspect in bomb attacks in southern Yemen said in court last week that he was recruited by Saudi intelligence to assassinate Foreign Minister Abdel Karim Al Iryani.

These allegations are completely unfounded because the kingdom respects the security of Yemen and the stability of that country is essential for us," Prince Nayef told reporters late Saturday.

The Saudi interior minister also denied a report from a source close to the Yemeni government that the last round of negotiations on demarcation of the border had failed.

The two sides were "close" to an accord and "the ball is now in the court of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh," he said, referring to proposals which Saudi Arabia submitted in July.

Agent who misled Israel about Syria was one of Mossad's stars

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An Israeli intelligence agent who nearly sparked a war with Syria by falsifying reports to his bosses was one of Israel's most resourceful and respected spies until discontent with his career turned him into a dangerous liar, associates said Sunday.

Israeli authorities identified the man as Yehuda Gil, a 63-year-old retired officer in the Mossad foreign intelligence service.

Gil was arrested two weeks ago and will face trial on charges which could include aggravated fraud, theft and transmitting information which endangered state security, officials said.

A Tel Aviv court lifted a publication ban on Gil's identity late Saturday after news of his escapades surfaced in the Israeli press last week.

Israeli media said Gil admitted passing fabricated intelligence reports to his superiors which contradicted Syrian President Hafez Assad's declared interest in making peace.

Former colleagues described Gil as an almost legendary spy, fluent in Arabic and several European languages and prodigious in his ability to recruit field agents and extract information from unwitting interlocutors.

At one point in his career Gil taught a course in the Mossad training school on the "Art of Lying" for spies, they said. The son of an Italian army officer who grew up in colo-

nia, Gil joined Mossad in 1970 and enhanced his reputation as a master spy by developing a key agent in Damascus, the colleagues said.

But he gradually became disenchanted as he was passed over by younger men for senior positions in Mossad, intelligence sources were quoted as saying in the Israeli press.

Gil retired in 1989 and went to work for the far-right Molodet Party, which is fiercely opposed to returning occupied Arab lands, including the Golan Heights seized from Syria in 1967.

Even after his retirement however, Gil continued to work part-time for Mossad, passing on fictitious reports from his former Syrian agent while collecting money for the spy.

Suspicious surfaced in recent years as Gil's pessimistic reports about Syria contradicted information received from army intelligence and other sources.

Mossad Chief Danny Yatom launched a probe last year, notably having Gil tailed in Paris where it was discovered that the secret meetings he claimed to be holding with his Syrian spy were a lie. Channel Two television said.

Investigators found tens of thousands of dollars in Gil's apartment but \$150,000 in funds paid to the man by Mossad were still missing, the media reported. Gil's lawyer, Yigal Shapira,

told Israel Radio Sunday his client underwent an "emotional crisis" when he retired and began exaggerating and inventing reports allegedly from his Syrian mole.

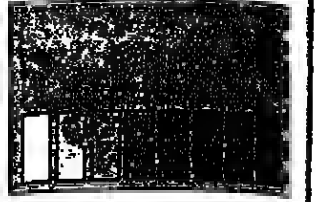
Former Mossad agents quoted in the Israeli press suggested Gil acted out of spite due to unhappiness with his treatment within the agency or perhaps was seeking to impress his former superiors with spectacular reports.

Investigators are also exploring the possibility Gil may have acted simply for material gain or from an ideological desire to undermine Syrian peace efforts.

Among the most serious of Gil's false reports concerned a series of Syrian troop redeployments in mid-1996 which he claimed were in preparation for a lightning strike into the Golan Heights, intelligence sources said. Israeli forces were put on alert and military officials say the two countries were on the brink of war, but Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai mistrusted the Mossad information and refused any escalation.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has resisted Syrian demands for a renewal of peace talks suspended 18 months ago, denied that Gil's falsified reports had a major impact on policy making.

"This is a serious affair but the media is exaggerating its importance because this did not affect our evaluations concerning Syria," Mr. Netanyahu said.



Girls hijack taxi to punish harassment by driver

TEHRAN (AFP) — Two Iranian girls hijacked a taxi and left the driver half naked to punish him for harassing them, a newspaper reported. Leila and Sornayeh were travelling in the cab when the driver started using "improper words which made us very upset," explained the girls. On the spur of the moment, "we decided to punish him, I pulled out from my purse a plastic gun I had bought for my brother's birthday, and put it to his neck and ordered him to stop the car," Leila said, quoted by the newspaper Iran. "The driver was very nervous, he stopped the car and stepped off. Then we ordered him to take off his clothes and the poor man did so. We left him half naked in the barren land in the dark and escaped with his clothes and car," she added.

Cleopatra's cure for baldness may have worked

LONDON (AFP) — Egyptian Queen Cleopatra invented a remedy for hair loss using mice extracts and grinded horse teeth amongst other ingredients and the mixture may work, the Sunday Times reported. The formula, which also comprised bear fat, stag marrow and honey, was applied to bald heads until small hairs began to grow and Cleopatra had recommended it to Julius Caesar, according to a BBC documentary to be shown next week. "I would imagine that Cleopatra's recipe is just as effective as many of the products that we have today," said David Fenton, a hospital dermatologist in London.

Four-legged newcomer finds friends in the White House

WASHINGTON (AFP) — If the floors at the White House boast any interesting new stains, don't blame Socks, the Clinton family cat. Look no further than the Clintons' bouncing new chocolate Labrador puppy, Clinton friend Tony Harrington brought the puppy to the White House, where president and pooch apparently bonded at play, spokesman Joe Lockhart told The Washington Post. The president and first lady did discuss the acquisition, Lockhart said. Socks, however, was not consulted on the Clintons' new pet project, the Post said.

Chirac to donate statue to museum after row over origin

PARIS (AFP) — President Jacques Chirac is to donate a 12th century earthenware Malian statue given to him as a birthday present to a Malian museum after a row over its origins, his officials said Wednesday. French newspapers reported last year that the statue of a ram came from an illegal archaeological dig near the Niger river in Mali, and had been smuggled out of the country. The Elysee Palace made no mention of the controversy, but said Chirac had telephoned his Malian counterpart Alpha Oumar Konare late Tuesday to say that he would donate it to a museum in the Malian capital Bamako. Chirac was given the statue by his staff for his 64th birthday last year.

Brad Pitt blew chances of ever visiting China

HOLLYWOOD (AFP) — Being in "Seven Years in Tibet" cost Brad Pitt any chance of ever visiting China and he says that's just fine with him. Because the Chinese government sees the film as seditious and against their country, he is ostracised from the country as the Dalai Lama himself. "I suppose I'm in good company," Pitt quips. "Who cares? There's 90 per cent of the rest of the world to visit."

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